

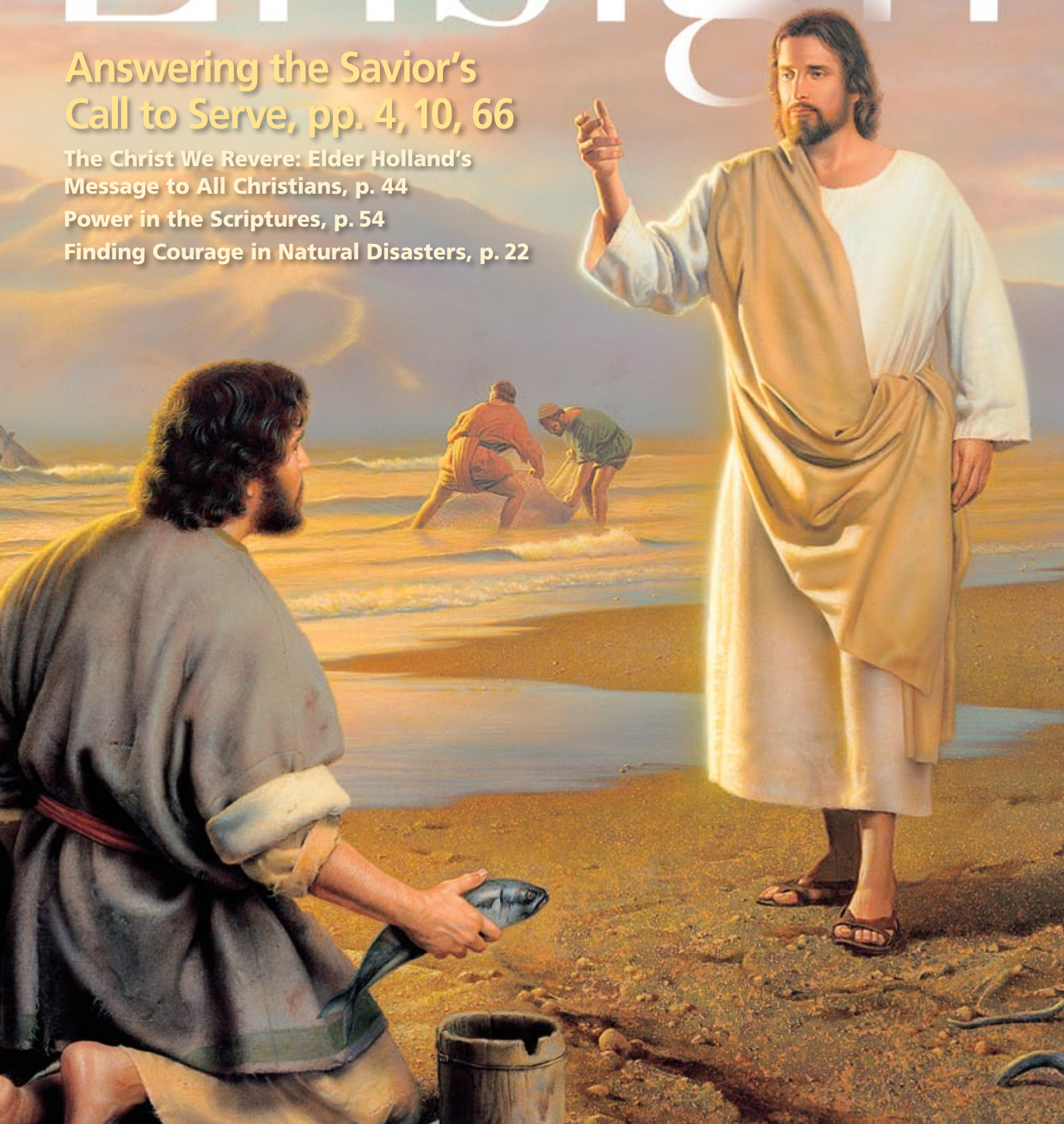
# Ensign

**Answering the Savior's  
Call to Serve, pp. 4, 10, 66**

**The Christ We Revere: Elder Holland's  
Message to All Christians, p. 44**

**Power in the Scriptures, p. 54**

**Finding Courage in Natural Disasters, p. 22**







*Five That Were Wise,*  
by Rose Dato Dall

*Ten virgins went to meet the bridegroom. "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." The wise "took oil in their vessels with their lamps." The foolish took their lamps but "no oil with them." When the cry came that "the bridegroom cometh," the foolish virgins left to buy oil. "The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." (See Matthew 25:1-13.)*



## MESSAGES

### FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

- 4** **The Savior's Call to Serve**  
President Thomas S. Monson

### VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE

- 7** **Taking Action in Time of Need**

**ON THE COVER**  
*Fishers of Men*, by  
Simon Dewey



## FEATURES

- 10** **Thomas S. Monson: Answering the Call of Duty**  
Heidi S. Swinton  
*President Thomas S. Monson considers duty to be "something sacred." Experiences from his life inspire us to follow his example.*

- 16** **Learn Your Duty**  
Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin  
*We are responsible for all our Creator has entrusted to us.*

- 18** **Cords of Love**  
Les Whitmore  
*Sometimes the greatest lessons our parents teach are the ones they let us learn on our own.*

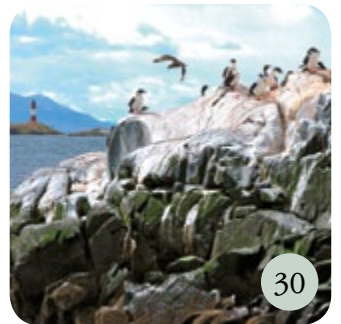
- 22** **Natural Disasters—We Don't Have to Be Afraid**  
Elder Stanley G. Ellis  
*The Holy Ghost can provide us comfort and help us prepare for natural disasters.*

- 26** **Keeping the Faith in a World of Confusion**  
Bishop Gérald Causse  
*Five principles to help us keep our faith and testimonies strong.*

- 30** **Finding Faith at the Ends of the Earth**  
Michael R. Morris  
*Converts in Ushuaia, Argentina, begin a new life as they embrace the gospel.*

- 34** **Decisions That Make a Difference**  
Melissa Merrill  
*Despite living 45 miles from their branch meetinghouse, the Crowthers decided to make the gospel a priority.*

- 40** **How Could She Let Him Go?**  
Name withheld  
*When my sister placed her baby for adoption, I learned that the healing power of the Atonement can comfort us in our deepest sorrows.*







44

## 42 I Thought It Was All Nonsense

Umberto Gilardi

*I went to church to support my wife, but inside I hoped to prove the missionaries wrong.*

## 44 Standing Together for the Cause of Christ

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

*A call to Christians to stand together in conviction, compassion, and understanding.*

## 50 Treasure in This City

Jane Nickerson

*I had never felt so lonely in my life. What was God's purpose for us in this place?*

## 54 Finding Power in the Scriptures

Holly Van Woerkom Munson

*Members share how study of the scriptures has strengthened their lives.*

## 58 Forgiveness and Making Up for Losses

Name withheld

*Understanding Christ's Atonement helped me begin to forgive.*

## 62 That I May Heal You

Dean M. Rueckert

*Repentance brings the healing power of the Atonement into our lives.*

## 66 Celebrating a Day of Service

Kathryn H. Olson

*Members throughout the world contributed to their communities in a day of service.*

## 78 Answering Questions about Our Faith

Michael Otterson

*Five ideas to keep in mind as you answer others' questions.*



58



8

## DEPARTMENTS

### 8 APRIL CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

#### SERVING IN THE CHURCH

### 15 Serving the One

Al VanLeeuwen

*We are the Savior's hands when we serve the one—regardless of our calling.*

#### WHAT WE BELIEVE

### 52 The Sacrament—Remembering the Savior

*Taking the sacrament is a weekly opportunity for introspection and rededication.*

### 65 FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS

### 70 LATTER-DAY SAINT VOICES

### 74 NEWS OF THE CHURCH



The articles with this icon contain an "Answering Questions" feature that provides doctrinal answers to commonly asked questions.

- What do we believe about Christ? p. 44
- Why do we partake of the sacrament? p. 53
- Why do we give humanitarian service? p. 69



**A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**  
August 2012 Volume 42 • Number 8

**The First Presidency:** Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf

**The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen

**Editor:** Craig A. Cardon

**Advisers:** Shayne M. Bowen, Bradley D. Foster, Christoffel Golden Jr., Anthony D. Perkins

**Managing Director:** David T. Warner

**Director of Family and Member Support:** Vincent A. Vaughn

**Director of Church Magazines:**

Allan R. Loyborg

**Business Manager:** Garff Cannon

**Managing Editor:** R. Val Johnson

**Assistant Managing Editor:**

LaRene Porter Gaunt

**Publications Assistant:** Faith Watson

**Writing and Editing Team:** Susan Barrett, Ryan Carr, David Dickson, David A. Edwards, Matthew D. Flitton, Hikari Loftus, Lia McClanahan, Melissa Merrill, Michael R. Morris, Richard M. Romney, Paul VanDenBerghe, Julia Woodbury  
**Editorial Intern:** Jennifer G. Jones

**Managing Art Director:** J. Scott Knudsen

**Art Director:** Tadd R. Peterson

**Design Team:** Jeanette Andrews, Fay P. Andrus, C. Kimball Bott, Thomas Child, Kerry Lynn C. Herrin, Colleen Hinckley, Eric P. Johnsen, Scott Mooy, Brad Teare

**Intellectual Property Coordinator:**

Collette Nebeker Aune

**Production Manager:** Jane Ann Peters

**Production Team:** Connie Bowthorpe Bridge, Julie Burdett, Bryan W. Gygi, Kathleen Howard, Denise Kirby, Ginny J. Nilson, Gayle Tate Rafferty  
**Prepress:** Joshua Dennis

**Printing Director:** Craig K. Sedgwick

**Distribution Director:** Evan Larsen

© 2012 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. The *Ensign* (ISSN 0884-1136) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah.

**Copyright information:** Text and visual material in the *Ensign* may be copied for incidental, noncommercial church or home use. Visual material may not be copied if restrictions are indicated in the credit line with the artwork. Copyright questions should be addressed to Intellectual Property Office, 50 E. North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0018; e-mail: cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

**Canada Post Information:** Publication Agreement #40017431.

## ENSIGN ONLINE

If you're looking to get more from your Church magazine experience, check out additional features at [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org).

## VIEW SERVICE RENDERED ON THE DAY OF SERVICE, 2011

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Church welfare plan, the First Presidency invited members worldwide to render service to the poor and needy. To view what some members did, go to [lds.org/welfare/75years/](http://lds.org/welfare/75years/) search.

## MEET TODAY'S PROPHETS AND APOSTLES

Visit [lds.org/study/prophets-speak-today/what-are-prophets?](http://lds.org/study/prophets-speak-today/what-are-prophets?) to read brief biographies on the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## WORKING TO OVERCOME AN ADDICTION?

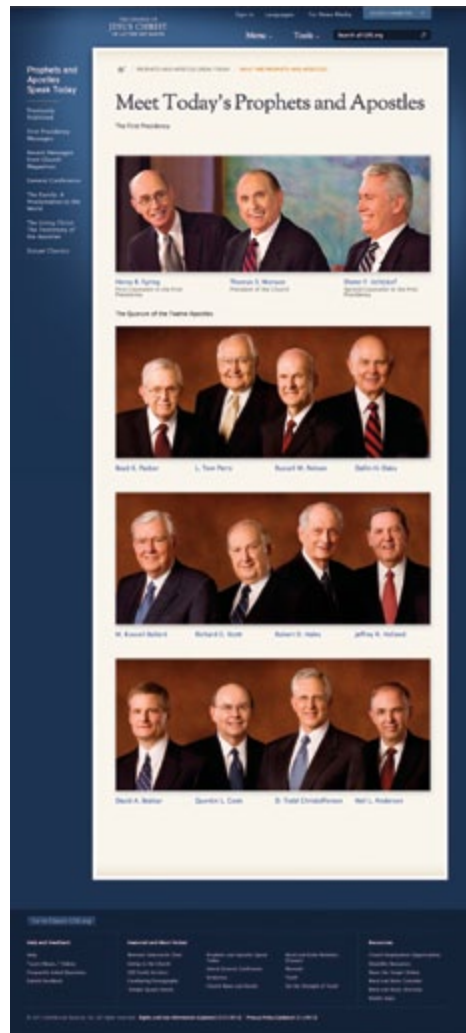
The Church's addiction recovery workbook is a helpful resource for youth and adults who are struggling with an addiction. The workbook is available online in several languages at [recoveryworkbook.lds.org](http://recoveryworkbook.lds.org).

## DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

The *Ensign* is interested in gathering family home evening ideas. Share with us your family home evenings that were: (1) most memorable; (2) most successful; (3) helped solve a family challenge; (4) were the most fun; or (5) were the most spiritual. Please label your article "Family Home Evening" and submit it online at [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org) by August 31.

We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. On each submission, please include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and the name of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

**Please submit articles through [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org)**, or send them to Ensign Editorial, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



## SUBSCRIBE TO OR RENEW THE ENSIGN

**Online:** Visit [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org).

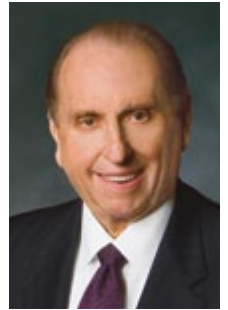
**By phone:** In the United States and Canada call 1-800-537-5971.

**By mail:** Send U.S. \$10 check or money order to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

## TO CHANGE ADDRESS

Send both old and new address information to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA. Please allow 60 days for changes to take effect.

By President  
Thomas S. Monson



# THE SAVIOR'S Call to Serve

All who have studied mathematics know what a common denominator is. For Latter-day Saints, there is a common denominator that binds us together. That common denominator is the individual call each of us receives to fill assignments in God's kingdom here upon the earth.

Are you ever guilty of murmuring when a calling comes to you? Or do you accept with thanksgiving each opportunity to serve your brothers and sisters, knowing that our Heavenly Father will bless those whom He calls?

I would hope that we would not lose the real objective of our cherished opportunities to serve. That objective, that eternal goal, is the same spoken of by the Lord and found in the Pearl of Great Price: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>1</sup>

May we ever remember that the mantle of membership



in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a cloak of comfort but rather a robe of responsibility. Our duty, in addition to saving ourselves, is to guide others to the celestial kingdom of God.

By willingly walking the path of service to God, we will never be in the position of Shakespeare's Cardinal Wolsey. Stripped of his power after a life of service to his king, he sadly lamented:

*Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my king, He would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.<sup>2</sup>*

What kind of service does heaven require? "The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days."<sup>3</sup>

I pause when I think of the words of President John Taylor (1808–87): "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."<sup>4</sup>

Like a glowing searchlight of goodness is the life of Jesus as He ministered among men. "I am among you as he that serveth,"<sup>5</sup> Jesus declared as He brought strength to the limbs of the cripple, sight to the eyes of the blind, hearing to the ears of the deaf, and life to the body of the dead.

With the parable of the good Samaritan, the Master taught us to love our neighbors as ourselves.<sup>6</sup> With His answer to the rich young ruler, He taught us to shed our





selfishness.<sup>7</sup> With the feeding of the 5,000, He taught us to see to the needs of others.<sup>8</sup> And with the Sermon on the Mount, He taught us to seek first the kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup>

In the New World, the resurrected Lord declared, “Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do.”<sup>10</sup>

We bless others as we serve in the shadow of “Jesus of Nazareth . . . who went about doing good.”<sup>11</sup> God bless us to find joy in serving our Father in Heaven as we serve His children on earth. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. William Shakespeare, *King Henry the Eighth*, act 3, scene 2, lines 456–58.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 164.
5. Luke 22:27.
6. See Luke 10:30–37; see also Matthew 22:39.
7. See Matthew 19:16–24; Mark 10:17–25; Luke 18:18–25.
8. See Matthew 14:15–21; Mark 6:31–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:5–13.
9. See Matthew 6:33.
10. 3 Nephi 27:21.
11. Acts 10:38.

#### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

“[The Lord] will not permit us to fail if we do our part. He will magnify us even beyond our own talents and abilities. . . . It is one of the sweetest experiences that can come to a human being” (Ezra Taft Benson, in *Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 20). Consider sharing an experience when you or someone you know has felt the Lord magnify his or her talents and abilities. Invite the family to share some of their own positive experiences as they have responded to “the Savior’s call to serve.”



## Serving in the Temple

By Benjamin A.

**W**hen I turned 17, I started thinking seriously about my future, and I prayed to Heavenly Father about what I could do to prepare to go on a mission and receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. I felt that I ought to go to the temple more often because it is the house of the Lord and would be the place where I could feel closest to my Heavenly Father.

So I set a goal to do 1,000 baptisms in a year. I truly felt the need to set this goal; I fasted to know if this was what I ought to do. Our Heavenly Father answered me, and I began to go to the Tampico Mexico Temple every Saturday.

After I had done 500 baptisms, I set a goal to do family history research on my ancestors, and I liked doing the research so much that I could not sleep because I was looking for names. I found 50 names and eight generations of my family history; I helped do the temple work for all of them.

I ended up doing over 1,300 baptisms, and I graduated from seminary, received the Melchizedek Priesthood, and am now serving as a full-time missionary, which was one of my biggest goals in life.

## I Can Do Something for Others

**E**ach of us can do something to help others. President Monson taught that we should love everyone and learn to see how we can help them.

Look at the boy sitting by the tree. Can you see others around him he could help?

When you have dinner with your family, suggest that each family member share one thing he or she did to serve someone that day. Write your own service experiences in your journal each day.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF WENDY BENTLEY; ILLUSTRATION BY BETH M. WHITAKER



Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.



Faith, Family, Relief

## Taking Action in Time of Need

As visiting teachers, one of our purposes is to help strengthen families and homes. The sisters we visit should be able to say, “If I have problems, I know my visiting teachers will help without waiting to be asked.” In order to serve, we have a responsibility to be conscious of the needs of the sisters we visit. When we seek inspiration, we will know how to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of each sister we are assigned to visit. Then, using our time, skills, talents, prayers of faith, and spiritual and emotional support, we can help give compassionate service during times of illness, death, and other special circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Through the help of reports from visiting teachers, the Relief Society presidency identifies those who have special needs because of physical or emotional illness, emergencies, births, deaths, disability, loneliness, or other challenges. The Relief Society president then reports her findings to the bishop. Under his direction, she coordinates assistance.<sup>2</sup>

As visiting teachers we can have “great reason . . . to rejoice” because of “the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work” (Alma 26:1, 3).



### From the Scriptures

Matthew 22:37–40; Luke 10:29–37; Alma 26:1–4; Doctrine and Covenants 82:18–19

#### NOTES

1. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.5.1; 9.6.2.
2. See *Handbook 2*, 9.6.2.
3. Henry B. Eyring, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 110.

### What Can I Do?

1. Am I using my gifts and talents to bless others?
2. Do the sisters I watch over know that I am willing to help them when they have a need?

### From Our History

In the early years of the Church, membership was small and centralized. Members could respond quickly when someone was in need. Today our membership is over 14 million and is spread throughout the world. Visiting teaching is part of the Lord’s plan to provide help for all His children.

“The only system which could provide succor and comfort across a church so large in a world so varied would be through individual servants near the people in need,” said President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

“. . . Every bishop and every branch president has a Relief Society president to depend upon,” he continued. “She has visiting teachers, who know the trials and the needs of every sister. She can, through them, know the hearts of individuals and families. She can meet needs and help the bishop in his call to nurture individuals and families.”<sup>3</sup>

# April Conference Notebook

*“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).*

As you review the April 2012 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

## STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

### Building Lasting Foundations

As a young man I worked with a contractor building footings and foundations for new houses. In the summer heat it was hard work to prepare the ground for the form into which we poured the cement for the footing. There were no machines. We used a pick and a shovel. Building lasting foundations for buildings was hard work in those days.

It also required patience. After we poured the footing, we waited for it to cure. Much as we wanted to keep the jobs moving, we also waited after the pour of the foundation before we took away the forms.

And even more impressive to a novice builder was what seemed to be a tedious and time-consuming process to put metal bars carefully inside the forms to give the finished foundation strength.

In a similar way, the ground must be carefully prepared for our foundation of faith to withstand the storms that will come into every life. That solid basis for a foundation of faith is personal integrity.

Our choosing the right consistently whenever the choice is placed before us creates the solid ground under our faith. It can begin in childhood since every soul is born with the free gift of the Spirit of Christ. With that Spirit we can know when we have done what is right before God and when we have done wrong in His sight.

Those choices, hundreds in most days, prepare the solid ground on which our edifice of faith is built. The metal framework around which the substance of our faith is poured

is the gospel of Jesus Christ, with all its covenants, ordinances, and principles.

One of the keys to an enduring faith is to judge correctly the curing time required. . . .

That curing does not come automatically through the passage of time, but it does take time. Getting older does not do it alone. It is serving God and others persistently with full heart and soul that turns testimony of truth into unbreakable spiritual strength.

**President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Mountains to Climb,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 24.**

#### Questions to Ponder

- Can you remember a time when your personal integrity was tested? How did you respond?
- How does serving God and others in faith strengthen your spiritual foundation?

Consider writing your thoughts in your journal or discussing them with others.

Additional resources on this topic: “Faith” in Study by Topic at LDS.org; Richard G. Scott, “The Transforming Power of Faith and Character,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 43–46.





# Fill in the Blank



**1.** “We can be delivered from the ways of evil and wickedness by turning to the teachings of the \_\_\_\_\_”

(L. Tom Perry, “The Power of Deliverance,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 97).

**2.** “We are not diminished when someone else is \_\_\_\_\_ upon”

(Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 31).



**4.** “This life is training for eternal exaltation, and that process means \_\_\_\_\_”

(Ronald A. Rasband, “Special Lessons,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 80).

**3.** “The truths and doctrine we have received have come and will continue to come by divine \_\_\_\_\_”

(D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 86).



## TWO-WORD SERMON

### DO YOU:

1. Harbor a grudge?
2. Gossip?
3. Exclude others?
4. Envy another?
5. Wish to cause harm?

### INSTEAD:

1. Be kind.
2. Forgive.
3. Talk peacefully.
4. Let the love of God fill your heart.
5. Do good to others.

Adapted from Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 75, 76.



Answers: 1. holy scriptures; 2. added; 3. revelation; 4. tests and trials.

## Prophetic Promise



“The Holy Ghost has confirmed truth in this conference and will again as you seek it, as you

listen, and as you later study the messages of the Lord’s authorized servants.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Mountains to Climb,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 26.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND; RIGHT: FROM TOP: PHOTOGRAPHS BY JED A. CLARK © IRI, JEFFREY ALURED © DESERET NEWS, AND CHRISTINA SMITH



# THOMAS S. MONSON

# Answering the Call of Duty

*Long ago President Thomas S. Monson committed to fulfill his duty to do the work of the Lord and to follow the example of Jesus Christ.*

By Heidi S. Swinton

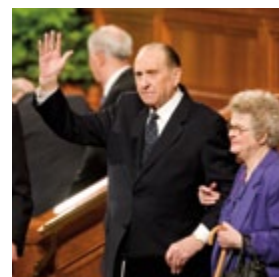
President Thomas S. Monson has said many times, “I like the word *duty*.” He considers it “something sacred.”<sup>1</sup> Of fulfilling his duty as the 16th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he said, “I pledge my life, my strength—all that I have to offer—in serving [the Lord] and in directing the affairs of His Church in accordance with His will and by His inspiration.”<sup>2</sup>

Known for his service to others, President Monson has given away his suits and shoes when on assignments abroad and returned home in slacks and slippers. He has made it a practice to visit friends and acquaintances who need encouragement. He has blessed countless people at hospitals and care centers, followed the prompting to make phone calls, and spoken at funerals too numerous to count. He has delivered dinners, chickens ready for roasting, and books with a tender

inscription. His daily schedule as President of the Church is filled with meetings and appointments, but he always makes time for people—most often one at a time. In the annals of Church history, he will be known for his love of people and his expression of that love by giving them his time.

## Jesus Christ’s Example of Duty

President Monson’s actions are driven by his testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said: “Although He came to earth as the Son of God, He humbly served those around Him. He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world.”<sup>3</sup> The Savior expressed His sense of duty when He proclaimed, “I came into the world to do the will of my father” (3 Nephi 27:13). With determination and gentle kindness born of



*From top: President Monson emanates love for people as he shakes hands with Boy Scouts, accepts a gift (with his wife, Frances), guides a young girl at a groundbreaking, and waves to the congregation at general conference (with his wife).*



**Jesus Christ taught in the synagogue and at the well. He blessed little children and raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead.**

eternal perspective, He “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

President Monson notes that when the call of duty came to Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, He answered, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). The Savior knew and responded time and again to His duty to guide, edify, and encourage all His Father’s children. President Monson said of this: “The Savior was ever up and about—teaching, testifying, and saving others. Such is our individual duty as members.”<sup>4</sup>

### Learning to Fulfill His Duty

President Monson grew up in the Sixth-Seventh Ward in the Temple View Utah Stake. There he learned about his duty to fulfill his priesthood assignments under the guiding hands of wise priesthood leaders, and he gained knowledge and a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ from inspired teachers.

In 1950 at age 22, Thomas Spencer Monson was sustained as bishop of the Sixth-Seventh Ward. He applied what he had learned about duty to those who had taught him its meaning. He was father of the ward, the president of the Aaronic Priesthood, a provider for the poor and needy, the keeper of proper records, and the common judge in Israel. His duties were many, but he met them with his characteristic optimism.

*“The Savior was ever up and about—teaching, testifying, and saving others. Such is our individual duty as members.”*

One of the bishop’s duties was to send to every serviceman a subscription to the *Church News* and to the *Improvement Era* and to write a personal letter to him each month. Since President Monson had served in the navy in World War II, he appreciated the importance of a letter from home. He had 23 ward members serving

in the military, so he called a sister in the ward to handle the details of mailing these letters. One evening he handed her the monthly stack of 23 letters.

“Bishop, don’t you ever get discouraged?” she asked. “Here is another letter to Brother Bryson. This is the 17th letter you have sent to him without a reply.”

“Well, maybe this will be the month,” he said. It was. The reply from Brother Bryson read: “Dear Bishop, I ain’t much at writin’ letters. Thank you for the *Church News* and magazines, but most of all thank you for the personal letters. I have turned over a new leaf. I have been ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. My heart is full. I am a happy man.”

President Monson saw in that letter the practical application of the adage “Do your duty, that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest.” Years later, while attending a stake conference, he spoke of his experience of writing to the servicemen. After the meeting, a young man came up to him and asked,



“Bishop, do you remember me?”

Without a pause President Monson replied, “Brother Bryson! How are you? What are you doing in the Church?”

The former serviceman replied with great pleasure that he was fine and serving in his elders quorum presidency. “Thank you again for your concern for me and the personal letters which you sent and which I treasure.”<sup>5</sup>

Of events like these, President Monson said: “Often small acts of service are all that is required to lift and bless another: a question concerning a person’s family, quick words of encouragement, a sincere compliment, a small note of thanks, a brief telephone call. If we are observant and aware, and if we act on the promptings which come to us, we can accomplish much good.”<sup>6</sup>

### Learning to Fulfill Our Duty

“As we follow in [Jesus Christ’s] steps today, we too will have an opportunity to bless the lives of others,” said President Monson. “Jesus invites us to give of ourselves: ‘Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.’”<sup>7</sup>

Our prophet’s view of duty requires looking beyond personal ambition, success, convenience, or pleasure to seeing and responding to the greater good. “To find real happiness,” President Monson said, “we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellowmen. Service to others is akin to duty, the fulfillment of which brings true joy.”<sup>8</sup>

*As President Monson asked everyone to stand whose life had been touched by the stake president, the congregation began to rise until everyone was standing.*



He believes that friendship makes serving others easy. “A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit,” he said. “A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens. And a friend reaches out.”<sup>9</sup>

Years ago President Monson attended a stake conference in Star Valley, Wyoming, USA, with the assignment to reorganize the stake presidency. But he did more than fulfill that duty. He touched the lives of all who attended with a simple gesture of love as he released the stake president, E. Francis Winters, who had served for 23 years.

The day of the stake conference, the members filled the building. It seemed as if each one was saying “a silent *thank-you* to this noble leader,” who obviously had done his duty with whole-souled devotion. As President Monson stood to speak, he stated how long President Winters had presided in the stake and had been “a perpetual pillar of strength to everyone in the valley.” Then he was prompted to do something he has not done before or since. He asked everyone who had been touched by President Winters’s life to stand. The outcome was electrifying. Every person in the audience rose to his or her feet.

President Monson told the congregation, many of whose eyes were filled with tears, “This vast throng reflects not only individual feelings but also the gratitude of God for a life well lived.”<sup>10</sup>

### Our Prophet’s Testimony of Duty

President Monson has given us these encouraging teachings regarding duty:

“Whatever our calling, regardless of our fears or anxieties, let us pray and then go and do, remembering the words of the Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, ‘I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’”<sup>11</sup>

“We can strengthen one another; we have the capacity to notice the unnoticed. When we have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that know and feel, we can reach out and rescue those for whom we have responsibility.”<sup>12</sup>

*“Often small acts of service are all that is required to lift and bless another.”*

“None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our world. There is no dividing line between our prosperity and our neighbor’s poverty.”<sup>13</sup>

“There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save.”<sup>14</sup>

“Perhaps when we face our Maker, we will not be asked, ‘How many positions did you hold,’ but rather, ‘How many people did you help?’”<sup>15</sup>

“As we go about our daily lives, we discover countless opportunities to follow the example of the Savior. When our hearts are in tune with His teachings, we discover the unmistakable nearness of His divine help. It is almost as though we are on the Lord’s errand; and we then discover that, when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help.”<sup>16</sup>

“By learning of Him, by believing in Him, by following Him, there is the capacity to become like Him. [Our] countenance can change; [our] heart can be softened; [our] step can be quickened; [our] outlook enhanced. Life becomes what it should become.”<sup>17</sup>

Like our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, we can commit to fulfill our duty to do the work of the Lord and follow the example of Jesus Christ. ■

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Happy Birthday,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 59.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Looking Back and Moving Forward,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 90.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “The Bridge Builder,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 68.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Anxiously Engaged,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 56.
5. See Thomas S. Monson, “The Call of Duty,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 39.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Three Goals to Guide You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 120–21.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “The Gifts of Christmas,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2003, 2.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “The Lord’s Way,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 93.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “To the Rescue,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 50.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “Your Eternal Home,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 54.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “They Pray and They Go,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 51.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “The Call to Serve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 47.
13. Thomas S. Monson, “In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 3.
14. Thomas S. Monson, “How Firm a Foundation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 68.
15. Thomas S. Monson, “Faces and Attitudes,” *New Era*, Sept. 1977, 50.
16. Thomas S. Monson, “Windows,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 69.
17. Thomas S. Monson, “The Way of the Master,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 4.



# SERVING THE ONE

By Al VanLeeuwen

When I started my freshman year of college, I quickly formed friendships with two other freshmen, one a rancher and the other a farmer. We made an unlikely threesome—two down-to-earth western US country boys and one fast-talking East Coast city slicker. After graduating from college, they returned home to ranch and farm, and I entered the corporate business world.

Annual Christmas cards and occasional phone calls kept us up to date as our lives advanced. By the time I was in my mid-30s, I had served twice as Scoutmaster. Later, as I finished my second “tour” as an assistant nursery leader, my two friends were serving in bishoprics. As time progressed, I fell into the trap of comparing my callings to my friends’ callings, and I began to feel unwanted and ignored.

By the time I was in my mid-40s, leadership callings extended to others would trouble my thoughts for days. Each time someone was called to a ward or stake leadership position, Satan would whisper to me that I was unworthy or lacked the faith necessary for such callings. I could intellectually fight off such thoughts through prayer and study, but I still struggled with my self-worth. Being “just an elder” and refereeing youth basketball games at age 50 while my friends were serving in stake presidencies was not what I had envisioned I would be doing at that age.

Then came an experience that changed my understanding of the gospel. I was assisting my



wife one Sunday with her Primary class full of energetic seven-year-olds. As Primary sharing time started, I noticed one of the class members huddled on her chair and obviously not feeling well. The Spirit whispered to me that she needed comfort, so I sat by her and quietly asked what was wrong. She didn’t answer but seemed to be in real distress, so I began to sing softly to her.

The Primary was learning a new song, and when we sang, “If I listen with my heart I hear the Savior’s voice,”<sup>1</sup> I began to feel the most incredible light and warmth fill my soul. I felt wrapped in eternal arms of love. I understood that Heavenly Father had heard this young girl’s prayer and that I was there to provide the comfort He wanted to give her. My spiritual understanding was opened, and I received a personal testimony of our Savior’s love for her, for each of His children, and for me. I knew He trusted me to serve someone in need, and I was where He wanted me to be. I learned that we are His hands when we serve the one.

I rejoice in any opportunity to serve, and I try to remain worthy to feel the promptings of the Spirit and to be where Heavenly Father wants me to be when one of His children needs service. ■

#### NOTE

1. Sally DeFord, “If I Listen with My Heart,” *2011 Outline for Sharing Time*, 28.



#### HOW MANY PEOPLE DID YOU HELP?

“Perhaps when we face our Maker, we will not be asked, ‘How many positions did you hold?’ but rather, ‘How many people did you help?’ In reality, you can never love the Lord until you serve him by serving his people.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Faces and Attitudes,” *New Era*, Sept. 1977, 50.

# LEARN YOUR Duty

*Duty reminds us we are stewards of all that our Creator has entrusted to us.*



**By Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008)**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*Joseph B. Wirthlin was born on June 11, 1917, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1986. The following excerpt is from an address he gave in general conference on October 5, 1980, as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. For the full text, see Ensign, Nov. 1980, at [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org).*

**M**ost of us don't mind doing what we ought to do when it doesn't interfere with what we *want* to do, but it takes discipline and maturity to do what we ought to do whether we want to or not. Duty is too often what one expects from others and not what one does. What people think and believe and plan are all very important, but what they *do* is the thing that counts most. It is a call to throw out selfishness and to think of the common good of all.

We must always remember that duty reminds us we are stewards of all that our Creator has entrusted to us. When we accept duties willingly and faithfully, we find happiness. Those who make happiness the chief objective of life are bound to fail, for happiness is a by-product rather than an end in itself. Happiness comes from doing one's duty

and knowing that his life is in harmony with God and His commandments. . . .

Every successful man and woman in the history of the world has known his or her duty and has had a firm desire to fulfill it. The Savior had a perfect sense of duty. Even though what was required of Him surpassed the limits of human capabilities, He submitted Himself to His Father's will and fulfilled His divine duty by atoning for the sins of mankind.

Joseph Smith was true to his calling and fulfilled his duty even in the face of severe persecution and great personal sacrifice. He persevered, he endured, and he accomplished the Restoration of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. . . .

President Spencer W. Kimball [1895–1985] has accepted the charge to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. He faithfully pursues his duty and is a wonderful example to us in all that he does to spread the gospel of love. The result is a worldwide Church and the fulfillment of latter-day prophecy.

These great men . . . might have chosen to follow a path easier than the one where duty led. But they did not. Certainly their duty did not always lead to personal comfort or casual convenience. Their duty frequently meant great sacrifice and personal hardship; but nevertheless, duty they chose, and duty they performed.

Life requires us to perform many duties—some routine, others more meaningful and important. An integral part of duty is to set the proper example and to take every opportunity to bolster others along this uphill road of life. This might be done with an





encouraging word, a compliment, a handshake—any indication of caring. And we need to keep in mind that as we learn our duties well here, we also are preparing for the performance of eternal duties. . . .

The absolute necessity to do our duties at home, in the Church, in our daily work, and also for our beloved country . . . is vividly and beautifully described by the Master Teacher, Jesus the Christ. He declared:

“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither

doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

“For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

***An integral part of duty is to set the proper example and to take every opportunity to bolster others along this uphill road of life.***

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

“He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

“But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:43–49).

“Be not weary in well-doing” (D&C 64:33), my brothers and sisters. Being true to one’s duty is a mark of true disciples of the Lord and the children of God. Be valiant in your duty. Stay in step. Do not fail in your most important task, that of keeping your second estate. Be true to your duty, for it will bring you to God.

I bear you my deep and sincere testimony that this is the only way to obtain happiness and help the kingdom grow and flourish. ■

*Capitalization and paragraphing standardized.*







# Cords of Love

*I threw down my gloves and walked away.  
“Let Dad finish the work himself,” I thought.*

An old log sits on my back porch. Over the years it has served as a stool for me or other family members to sit on while enjoying the evening sun. At times it has been used as a stand for one of my wife’s potted plants. But mostly, the purpose of that log is to remind me of the value of hard work, correct choices, and the patient love of a father.

In the fall of 1972, we moved from the city to a small town in the Nevada (USA) desert. One of the first things my dad did was remove the gas furnace and install a wood-burning stove. He informed us that if we wanted to keep warm through the winter, we would cut wood.

The most common firewood in that part of Nevada was mesquite, a thorn-covered, shrub-like tree with dark brown wood that is so dense that it can make a chain saw throw sparks. Turning it into firewood was hard, dirty work. There were sharp thorns to contend with, joint-numbing vibrations from the chain saw, and logs that could weigh as much as 80 pounds (36 kg) each. The desert’s notoriously extreme climate made the chore even less pleasant. It always seemed to be hot or cold, with little moderation.

## Time to Gather Firewood

One cold Saturday morning, my father informed me that we would need several more cords of wood to get us through the winter.

I looked through the window at the pile of wood in our backyard and argued that we had enough wood to get us through the winter—at least enough to put the chore off for another day. I reminded him that there was going to be a good football game on TV that day. And wouldn’t we both enjoy that?

Not persuaded by my argument for procrastination, my father loaded the chain saws and other equipment onto our truck while I waited inside by the fireplace, hopeful that a taste of the cold morning air would dampen his enthusiasm for the job.

It didn’t.

He beckoned me from the back door, and I gave one last pitch, arguing to wait at least until later in the day when it would be warmer. My father lowered his brow and locked his eyes on me, his way of letting me know that he was losing patience.

I put my coat on and shut the door behind me with an angry grunt. I climbed into the pickup and turned the radio to my favorite station, then settled into a well-practiced teenage sulk, a mood I maintained until we arrived at the mesquite patch about 30 minutes later.

## A Few Painful Moments

I begrudgingly got out of the truck and slipped on the oily work gloves. As I moved through the thicket toward the dead tree my father had begun cutting, a thorn caught me in the forehead. In my haste and fury, I grabbed the offending branch and punctured the leather glove with another thorn that ended up embedded a half-inch into my palm.

My father saw what had happened. He stopped working and advised me to put ice on my hand





*As I reached the apex of the hill, the thrill of a spectacular view and easy descent turned into horror.*

for a few minutes. But I didn't want his sympathy. "We didn't have to be out here today!" I hollered. "In fact we shouldn't need to cut wood at all!"

Although he remained calm, I could see that I had pushed my father about as far as I could. He suggested that I sit in the truck to cool down, which I gladly did. But as I sat there, I didn't cool down. I hated being out there on a cold, miserable day, and I resented the fact that he had removed a perfectly good furnace from our home over everyone's objections—even my mother's. My teenage sense of fairness told me that it might teach him a lesson if he had to cut a load of wood by himself.

### **Looking for the Easy Way Out**

I looked at a small hill to the east. I knew home was over that hill—an easy hour walk, I figured.

At first my conscience wouldn't allow me to leave. I climbed out of the truck and headed back to the work site. But when my father began instructing me to pick up wood, move a branch, and get oil for the saw, my defiant attitude returned. I threw my gloves at his feet and told him to finish the job himself. I would be walking home.

He stared in disbelief for a moment, then nodded his acknowledgment and got back to work. I had been hoping for a stronger reaction—one that would justify my act of rebellion. Nevertheless, I turned and headed home on foot.

It took me longer than I expected to get to the base of the hill, and by the time I got there, it was looking more

like a mountain. I glanced back and could see my dad still laboring with the firewood in the distance. For a brief moment, guilt got to me and I thought of turning back. But pride pushed me forward.

The walk turned into a climb. The hill was far steeper than I had originally judged, and the loose rocks beneath my feet made the ascent rather treacherous. I fell several times, bruising my knee and opening up a gash on my right hand, making the injury from the thorn seem minor by comparison.

As I trudged up the hill, I began to notice that it was no longer cold. The sun was beating down on the blackish rocks, and sweat was dripping off the end of my nose. I stopped to catch my breath. My original estimate of an hour to get home had already passed, and I was only half-way up the "hill." But I moved on, stopping every so often to wipe my brow and catch my breath.

I looked back and could see that the truck was a mere speck now. I smacked my dry lips together. I was now far enough that I could see the top of the hill. It was just a few hundred feet away, and I knew from there it would be all downhill. I moved forward, suddenly excited by the prospect of being at the top.

### **Where My Pride Had Led Me**

As I reached the apex of the hill, the thrill of a spectacular view and easy descent turned into horror as I realized that the small mountain I had just climbed wasn't the sole obstacle between me and home. There were two more mountains, each at least as big as the one I had just climbed.

I looked back and could no longer see my father's truck. However, the dust trail rising in the distance told me that he had finished and was on his way home.

I sighed and my shoulders dropped. The promise of an easy walk home—an easy way out of a simple chore with my father—had already turned into a long, miserable journey. The realization of what I had done hit me hard and suddenly. I dropped to my knees and asked Heavenly Father to forgive me for my rebellion, for acting so horribly toward my father, and to help me make it home. Then,



without any other options, I returned to the slog home.

I spent the rest of a long day trudging up and down hills and over desert terrain. During that trek, the guilt of abandoning my father tore at me. I also reflected on what my choices had caused me to miss out on: I would have already been home with my dad with a full load of firewood, plenty to drink, and probably even time to watch the last half of the football game that had seemed so important to me that morning.

By the time I stumbled into our driveway late that afternoon, I was dehydrated and near exhaustion. The anger I had exhibited toward my father earlier in the day was now turned on myself.

### Home at Last

I trudged up the front steps, anxious to express my regret and ask my father for forgiveness. However, when my mother met me at the door, she informed me that my father had been home only long enough to unload the firewood. He explained to her what had happened and then left again—to spend the rest of the day looking for me.

Although I was a 14-year-old boy who abhorred displays of emotion, I fell into my mother's arms and wept openly. My tears were not for what I had been through but for what I had put my father through, for my poor choices, for my wanton disobedience. I spent the next several hours praying for forgiveness and asking that my father make it home safely.

My father made it back home just after dark, and I ran to embrace him as he walked through the door.

"Feet hurt?" was all he said. I nodded, and we sat down to a quiet dinner.

Without either of us saying so, I knew that he had forgiven me, and he knew

that I had learned a valuable lesson about diligent work and obedience—the very lesson he had been trying to teach me.

Over the years, that day has become ingrained in my memory, perhaps because it taught me the value of hard work and of making correct choices. But more than that, for me that one eventful day encapsulates so much of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation: God-given agency, temptation with the false promise of an easier way, the possibility of incorrect choices, the consequences of rebellion, repentance, and a patient and forgiving father.

Today, as I sit on my log, enjoying the evening sun, I am grateful for a loving and forgiving father and for a loving and forgiving Heavenly Father. ■

*Without either of us saying so, I knew he had forgiven me.*







PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY D. ALLRED © DESERET NEWS



By Elder  
Stanley G. Ellis  
Of the Seventy



# Natural Disasters

WE DON'T HAVE  
TO BE AFRAID

**T**he last days will be marked by many calamities and the rise of evil in the world. Against these threats the Lord and His prophets have given us counsel on how to be righteous and avoid spiritual pitfalls and evil. However, calamities—such as tornadoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis—seem to strike randomly and devastate the just as well as the unjust. These calamities terrify many of us. But I have learned that we don't have to be afraid of disasters. When we are grounded in the gospel and when we are prepared, we can weather any storm.

## **Before the Storm: Make Preparation a Family Priority**

In September 2005, I was an Area Seventy serving in the North America Southwest Area, which included parts of the United States such as Houston, Texas. We learned that Hurricane Rita—the most intense cyclone in recorded history that had ever been observed in the Gulf of Mexico—was headed straight for us. I was asked to preside over the Church's emergency response in the area. We held daily conference calls with priesthood leaders, stake presidents,

*As we seek  
Heavenly Father's  
guidance,  
the Holy Ghost  
will help us  
prepare for,  
endure, and  
recover from  
natural disasters.*

mission presidents, Church welfare and humanitarian aid representatives, and emergency response leaders. We talked about all kinds of things—whether the bishops' storehouse was in order, where people could evacuate, and how best to coordinate the recuperation efforts after the storm. It was a well-coordinated Church response and an inspirational experience.

One of the stake presidents in the area was impressed eight or nine months before the storm to encourage members of the stake to prepare. He indicated that he wasn't claiming to be a prophet but that the promptings from

the Spirit had been clear. Members of the stake followed the basic preparation strategies suggested by the Church. When the hurricane hit, no members of the stake were killed. Furthermore, because members had gathered needed supplies and had a plan in place, their circumstances were far better than they might otherwise have been. They had paid attention to that warning from the Spirit.

A similar situation occurred to my family and me. About three months before the storm, we were impressed to

*Do you want to talk to your children about giving and receiving comfort during disasters? See the inspiring testimonies of two young survivors on pages 18–19 of this month's issue of the Friend.*

**Previous page: Workers sort through the rubble of an apartment that collapsed during the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti.**

**People evacuating Houston, Texas, USA, before the onslaught of Hurricane Rita.**

have our generator serviced. Many people in the area have small generators so that when storms come and electricity is lost, they can provide power to keep the food in their refrigerators and freezers from going bad. When we had our generator checked, we discovered it was not working. We were able to get it fixed well before the storm came. Our family, members of our ward, and neighbors all ended up using our generator after the hurricane hit. Fixing it turned out to be a great blessing.

This principle of preparation applies to individuals as well as families. Parents, you can have a powerful impact on your family by involving your children in preparation and in family prayers for the Lord's guidance. In other words, when your family considers its preparedness, the question, what should we do? ought to be a major part of your family prayer. You can also talk about these topics and share

ideas in family home evening. Then carry out those plans.

Moreover, the best thing parents can do is to live by these teachings. Someone once said that values are “caught” not “taught.” I found that to be true. As children see their parents seeking and following the guidance of the Spirit, they will learn how the process of revelation works.

### **During the Storm: Follow the Revelation You Receive for Your Family**

As the storm approached, a major question we asked was whether or not people should evacuate the area. The Spirit directed me not to make a general recommendation for the whole area but rather to ask each stake leader, each bishopric, and each family to prayerfully consider the situation and receive their own inspiration as to what they should do. As events unfolded, it became obvious that the Spirit knew what was best for each individual family.

Leaders in one stake, for example, knew they were directly in the path of the hurricane and advised members to evacuate. The stake president and his wife evacuated to the home of his sister. Afterward, the hurricane veered, heading toward them once again. They had evacuated directly into the storm!

You might ask yourself, “What kind of inspiration was that?” But consider what happened. This stake president and his wife knew how to prepare a home for a hurricane, whereas his sister did not. They were able to help their relatives get ready for the storm, and when it hit, the damage was minimal compared to what it would have been otherwise. The Lord had guided them to do what was best.







***A Mormon Helping Hands volunteer sifts through rubble in Joplin, Missouri, USA, after a tornado in May 2011.***

In our family's case, we felt that we should not evacuate. So we stayed. Not only did we safely weather the storm, but we also were able to help other people in the area. Some of our married children were impressed to evacuate, so they left. Heeding the Spirit blessed each family, ward, and stake.

### **After the Storm: Let the Gospel Remove the Sting**

Sometimes good people do suffer during calamities. The Lord does not eliminate suffering—it's part of the plan. For example, a stake center in the central United States was recently destroyed by a tornado. That tornado also demolished the stake president's home. He and his family lost all of their earthly possessions. However, that's all they were: earthly possessions. The loss was sad, but it was not an eternally damaging disaster. Sometimes what we think is important really isn't important at all. This realization is not necessarily easy to accept, but it is true, and understanding this provides reassurance.

The worst-case scenario in one of these disasters is that someone might be killed. That's a very sad thing. But since we know the truth, we know that even such loss is part of Heavenly Father's plan. We know what life is truly all about; we know why we are here and where we are

going. Because of this eternal perspective, the pain can be eased. Knowledge of the plan of salvation takes the sting out of death (see 1 Corinthians 15:55).

Long ago, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego did not know what would happen when they were tossed into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship a false god. They said to the king, "Our God . . . will deliver us. . . . But if not, we [still] will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17–18).

Likewise, many pioneers of the restored Church were willing to attempt crossing the North American plains in the mid-1800s, even with the possibility of death along the way. The Book of Mormon describes good people being killed and teaches that they "are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God" (Alma 24:22).

In each case, individuals faced death with faith. For them, because of the peace the gospel brings, the sting of death was taken away. Although it is painful to lose someone you love and though most of us would hate to die because we have so many great things to live for, the fact of the matter is that everyone is going to die sometime. When you know the gospel plan, you know that death is not the end of the world. Your existence will continue, and family relationships can continue even after the grave has claimed our mortal bodies. In the overall scheme of things, death is not eternally devastating. As Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "We live to die, and we die to live again. From an eternal perspective, the only death that is truly premature is the death of one who is not prepared to meet God."<sup>1</sup> An eternal perspective is part of the peace the gospel can give us.

The Lord knows us. The Lord loves us. And the Lord wants to help us. Calamities will come, but we don't have to fear them. If we are willing to be guided and ask for His direction, the Lord through the Holy Ghost will help us prepare for, endure, and recover from any natural disaster. ■

#### **NOTE**

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Face the Future with Faith," *Ensign*, May 2011, 34.



**By Bishop  
Gérald Caussé**

First Counselor in  
the Presiding Bishopric

# Keeping the Faith

## IN A WORLD OF CONFUSION

I was born in southwestern France “of goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1) who, from the time I was young, helped me develop faith in Jesus Christ and a testimony of the restored gospel. At school, on the other hand, many of my professors expressed doubts about and even hostility toward any religious belief. On many occasions I heard the teachings of Korihor from those who were belittling my beliefs:

“Behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers. How do ye know of their surety?”

“. . . Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see” (Alma 30:14–15).

When I was 17, I began taking philosophy classes in high school. One day the teacher said to the class, “Surely there isn’t anyone here who believes that Adam really existed!” Then he scanned the room with the look of an inquisitor, ready to pounce on whoever dared to admit to such

belief. I was petrified! However, my desire to be loyal to my faith was even stronger. I glanced around to see that I was the only one of those 40 students to raise a hand. The teacher, taken by surprise, changed the subject.

All members of the Church at some time in their lives face moments that test the sincerity and strength of their testimonies. Braving these trials of our faith helps us stand firm in a world that is falling more and more into the depths of confusion. This confusion is evident in the barrage of messages that surround us. With the advent of the Internet, for example, an uninterrupted avalanche of contradictory

*To strengthen our testimonies and protect ourselves from error, we must constantly nourish and fortify our faith.*

opinions and information invades our everyday lives. These contradictions can become disconcerting and paralyzing.

How can we distinguish between truth and error? How can we avoid becoming like those who are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it”? (D&C 123:12).

It is up to us whether we remain firm in our testimonies. When I think about my past, I realize that the success of my personal journey depended on a few simple principles that kept me on course. These principles allowed me to develop myself spiritually despite the “mists of





***Disciples of Christ hunger and thirst every day after spiritual knowledge. This personal practice allows us to follow the example of Joseph Smith.***

darkness” (1 Nephi 12:17) and snares that surround all of us.

### **Seek the Truth Continually**

To those who claim that “ye cannot know” (Alma 30:15), the Lord has answered, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). That is a marvelous promise.

Disciples of Christ hunger and thirst every day after spiritual knowledge. This personal practice is founded on study, contemplation, and daily prayer. It allows us to follow the example of Joseph Smith, who “came to the conclusion that [he] must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else . . . ask of God” (Joseph Smith—History 1:13).

Studying the word of God protects us from the influence of false doctrines. The Lord said, “For unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have

enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (2 Nephi 28:30).

### **Accept Unanswered Questions**

In our search for truth, we can be tempted to want to understand everything right away. However, the intelligence of God is so infinite that “it is impossible that man should find out all his ways” (Jacob 4:8). We must accept living for a time without answers to all of our questions. Like Nephi, we faithfully acknowledge that God “loveth his children; nevertheless, [we] do not know the meaning of all things” (1 Nephi 11:17).

The Lord, nevertheless, supplies us with the knowledge necessary for our salvation and exaltation. He promises, “Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you” (D&C 88:64). We receive these answers progressively, “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30), depending on our needs and our capacity to comprehend.

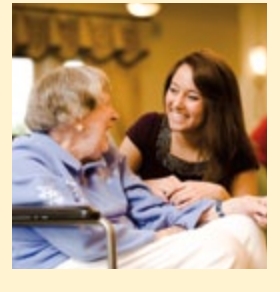
It is up to us to distinguish between questions that are truly essential to our eternal progress and those that result from intellectual curiosity, need for proof, or desire for personal satisfaction.

### **Seek the Testimony of the Spirit**

Each of us may experience moments of personal doubt. These



*We must exercise works. We cannot hope to receive personal revelation unless we conduct ourselves like faithful disciples of Christ.*





doubts are rarely alleviated by the search for rational explanations. For example, some scientific or archaeological discoveries may reinforce our testimonies of scripture, but spiritual knowledge cannot be proven by logic or physical evidence.

Knowledge of the truth is based on the testimony of the Spirit. As the Apostle Paul said, “The things of God knoweth no man, but [by] the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

We have the assurance that “the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not” (Jacob 4:13). The Spirit can have an even more powerful effect on us than our physiological senses. To the Apostle Peter, who had just declared his faith, Jesus replied, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). After all, how many of Christ’s contemporaries did not recognize Him despite seeing Him with their own eyes!

### Seek the Words of Prophets and Apostles

I recently had a discussion with a dignitary of another church. Desirous to determine if we were a Christian church, he suggested organizing a debate between the doctrinal experts of our two religions.

The strength and truth of the doctrine of Christ, however, rest not upon the debate of experts but upon the sacred testimonies of His chosen

disciples. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

For the many long centuries of the Apostasy, the world did not lack experts, but it *had* lost the witnesses of Christ. As a result, human reason replaced the strength of divine revelation.

When we are troubled, our first reflex must be to search the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. Their writings are beacons that cannot deceive us: “Wherefore, we search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken” (Jacob 4:6).

### Nourish Your Faith

We do not receive a “witness until after the trial of [our] faith” (Ether 12:6). Faith has the power to unlock knowledge of eternal truths. Pushed to its fulness, knowledge becomes an absolute and perfect certitude. Of the brother of Jared, Moroni wrote that “because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; . . . and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting” (Ether 3:19).

To strengthen our testimonies and protect ourselves from error, we must

therefore constantly nourish and fortify our faith. To begin with, we need to have pure hearts and great humility. Jacob warned the people of Nephi about the pride of those who “when they are learned . . . think they are wise, and . . . hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves” (2 Nephi 9:28).

Next, we must exercise works. The Apostle James taught that “faith [was] wrought with . . . works, and by works was faith made perfect” (James 2:22). We cannot hope to receive personal revelation unless we conduct ourselves like faithful disciples of Christ. Respecting the covenants we have made with God qualifies us to receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost, who enlightens our intelligence and causes our spirits to blossom.

I testify of the truthfulness of these principles. I know by experience that when we apply them in our lives, they ensure our protection in a confused and disoriented world. They harbor a marvelous promise: “And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, . . . and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:42). ■

#### NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.

# FINDING FAITH

## at the Ends of the Earth

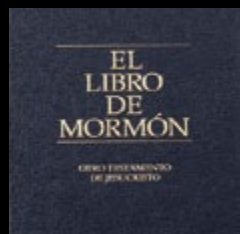
By Michael R. Morris

Church Magazines

Les Éclaireurs Lighthouse rises like a sentinel from its islet perch in the chilly Beagle Channel. French for “the Scouts” or “the Enlighteners,” Les Éclaireurs emits a flash of light every 10 seconds from its isolated post.

Five nautical miles (8 km) to the north is Argentina’s southernmost city, Ushuaia, located on the tip of the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. Ninety miles (145 km) to the south is Cape Horn and beyond that, the frozen Antarctic.

For those who have embraced The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here at what locals call “the end of the earth,” Les Éclaireurs serves as a metaphor for the restored gospel. Like a lighthouse, the gospel is a beacon that has brought them from the spiritual darkness of the world and landed them safely on the shores of faith and fellowship.



Through the Book of Mormon, God “answered the most important prayer I ever said,” says Guillermo Leiva (above, center), who serves as a branch president in Ushuaia. Above right: Les Éclaireurs Lighthouse and photos of Ushuaia.

### I Found Answers

Guillermo Javier Leiva remembers the pain of his divorce in 2007. He had to find his own apartment and was no longer able to return home every evening to his young son, Julian. He felt empty and alone.

“I was very unhappy,” he says, “and in moments of anguish, I looked for God.”

Guillermo began praying for answers and help. “I said, ‘Father, I’m not worthy for Thee to enter my house, but a word from Thee will be enough to heal me.’”

The answer to that prayer came a short while later when two young men in white shirts and ties stopped to talk with him while he was playing with his son outside his new apartment.

“One of them greeted me and asked if I had faith,” he recalls. “I told him yes but that I wasn’t the best Christian. He then asked if I would





read a book if he left it with me. I told him yes.”

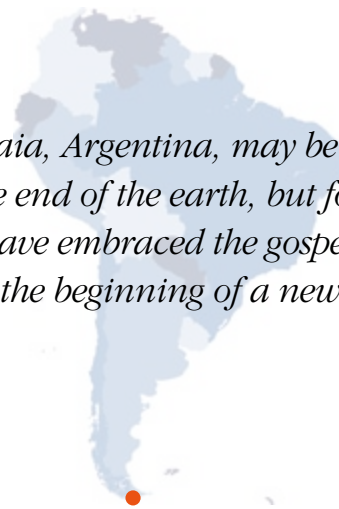
As Guillermo began reading the verses in Alma 32 that the missionaries had marked for him, he says, “I immediately felt a great joy in my soul that I hadn’t felt in a long time. The book touched my heart. I couldn’t stop reading.”

Guillermo no longer attended his previous church, but he told the missionaries that he had no intention of being baptized again. Nevertheless, he welcomed their visits and their reading assignments in the Book of Mormon.

As he read, his soul grieved with Nephi when he learned how that prophet had sorrowed “because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me” (2 Nephi 4:18). “I knew that I too had sinned,” Guillermo says, “and I felt bad about it.”

As he read, he felt that he was being rescued from darkness and despair and brought into “the light of the glory of God” (Alma 19:6).

*Ushuaia, Argentina, may be located at the end of the earth, but for those who have embraced the gospel here, it is the beginning of a new life.*



And as he read of the baptismal covenant set forth at the Waters of Mormon, he realized the importance of baptism by proper priesthood authority. “If I recognized that the seed was good, what *did* I ‘have . . . against being baptized in the name of the Lord?” (Mosiah 18:10), he asked himself.

“Every time I read, I felt peace and I found answers,” Guillermo says. “I realized that the Book of Mormon was the word of God I had asked for in my prayers.”

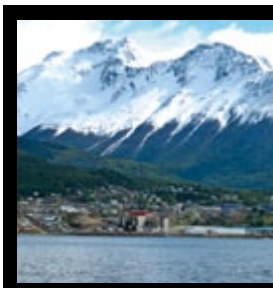
When he was baptized in March 2009, he experienced a spiritual rebirth and a renewed hope for the future.

Amanda, “and we knew we needed a church to help us.”

In the early 1990s the Robledos moved with their four children from Mendoza, in northwest Argentina, to Ushuaia. When they were introduced to the Church two years later, they perceived immediately that there was something different about both the spirit and the teachings of the full-time missionaries.

Amanda knew little of Latter-day Saints. “And what I had heard wasn’t good,” she says. But she, Ricardo, and their children resonated to what they were learning.

“I felt the Spirit when the missionaries taught us,” says



*Right: For Amanda and Ricardo Robledo (with daughters Bárbara and Irene), learning that their family could be together forever was the crowning doctrine that helped them accept the restored gospel.*



“Baptism was a chance to start over,” Guillermo says. “I have changed my life. I am very happy now. I know that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ and that God answers prayers because He answered the most important prayer I ever said.”

### **We Needed a Church**

As a child, Amanda Robledo had no spiritual remedy for the physical pain she suffered after her mother died. And her husband, Ricardo, could find no answers to his heartfelt religious questions following the death of his brother.

One of those questions was, Is there a church on earth that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ? Their search for that church and for answers to their questions ultimately prepared them to accept the restored gospel.

As they searched, they attended different denominations and investigated various religious beliefs. They looked for a church that not only conformed to Christ’s teachings but would also strengthen their family.

“This was a difficult time for our family,” recalls

their daughter Bárbara, who was 11 at the time. “And I liked it when they taught us that we could pray as a family.”

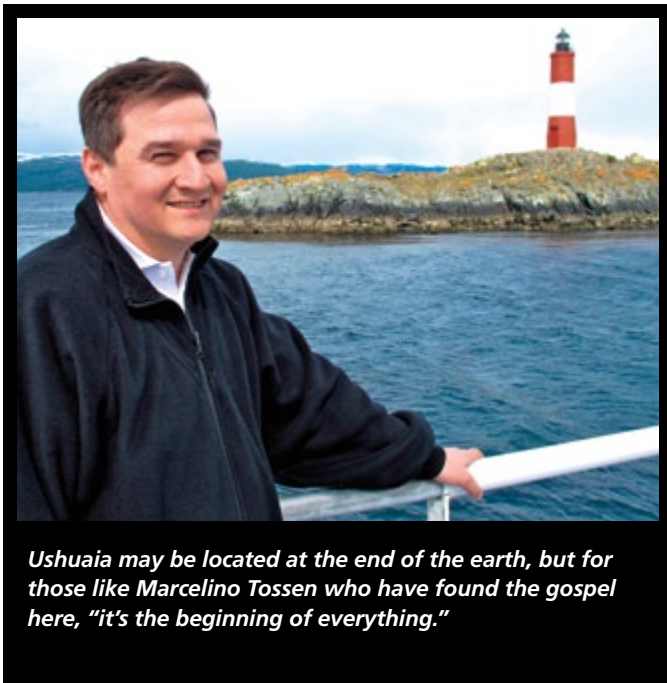
Taking the missionary discussions, reading the Book of Mormon, and attending church, Ricardo says, “gave us all the answers we were seeking—answers about baptism, pre-earth life, the divinity of Christ, the immortality of man, gospel ordinances, marriage, and the eternal nature of the family.”

For the Robledos, learning that their family could be together forever was the crowning doctrine of the restored gospel.

“My conversion came at that moment,” says Ricardo, who was baptized less than three weeks after the first discussion and now serves as second counselor in the district presidency. “I suffered when I lost a brother at age 49, but I understood that I could reclaim him by doing his temple work. This assurance gave me peace and happiness.”

Amanda, baptized a short while later with one of their sons, says, “I haven’t had my mother since I was very young. I always thought I had lost her, and this caused





*Ushuaia may be located at the end of the earth, but for those like Marcelino Tossen who have found the gospel here, "it's the beginning of everything."*

me a lot of pain. But when the missionaries told us that a family can be together forever, it really touched my heart. It is wonderful to think that I will see her again."

After Ricardo and Amanda were married for eternity in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple, their children were sealed to them. Being sealed as a family, completing ordinance work for many deceased family members, and sending three of their children on full-time missions have brought Ricardo and Amanda great joy.

"One of the greatest blessings we have received as members of the Church," Amanda says, "is that our children obey God."

### **The Beginning of Everything**

Marcelino Tossen believed in God, read the Bible, and enjoyed talking about religion, so when the full-time missionaries knocked on his apartment door one warm January day in 1992, he invited them in. That decision changed his life.

"Elder Zanni and Elder Halls worked under the impressions of the Spirit," recalls Marcelino. Before that first discussion had even ended, the elders told him that he would be baptized into the Church, even telling him the exact day he would be baptized.

"I'm not going to get baptized," Marcelino countered. "I want only to talk to you."

The missionaries gave him a Book of Mormon and

asked him to read several verses and pray that night about their message. He did so but felt nothing.

During a subsequent discussion, however, Elder Zanni asked him, "Would it be all right if we prayed so you can ask Heavenly Father if what we have been teaching you is true?"

As he prayed, Marcelino says, "my heart began to burn fervently within me. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. I couldn't even finish my prayer, and I arose from my knees."

Elder Zanni asked Marcelino if he had felt anything during his prayer. When Marcelino told him no, the missionary said, "I felt the Spirit very strong. It's strange that you didn't feel anything."

When he admitted what he had felt, Marcelino says, "the elders read from the Doctrine and Covenants, telling me that when the Lord wants us to know if something is right, He will send His peace or make our heart burn within us [see D&C 6:23; 9:8]. That day was a turning point for me."

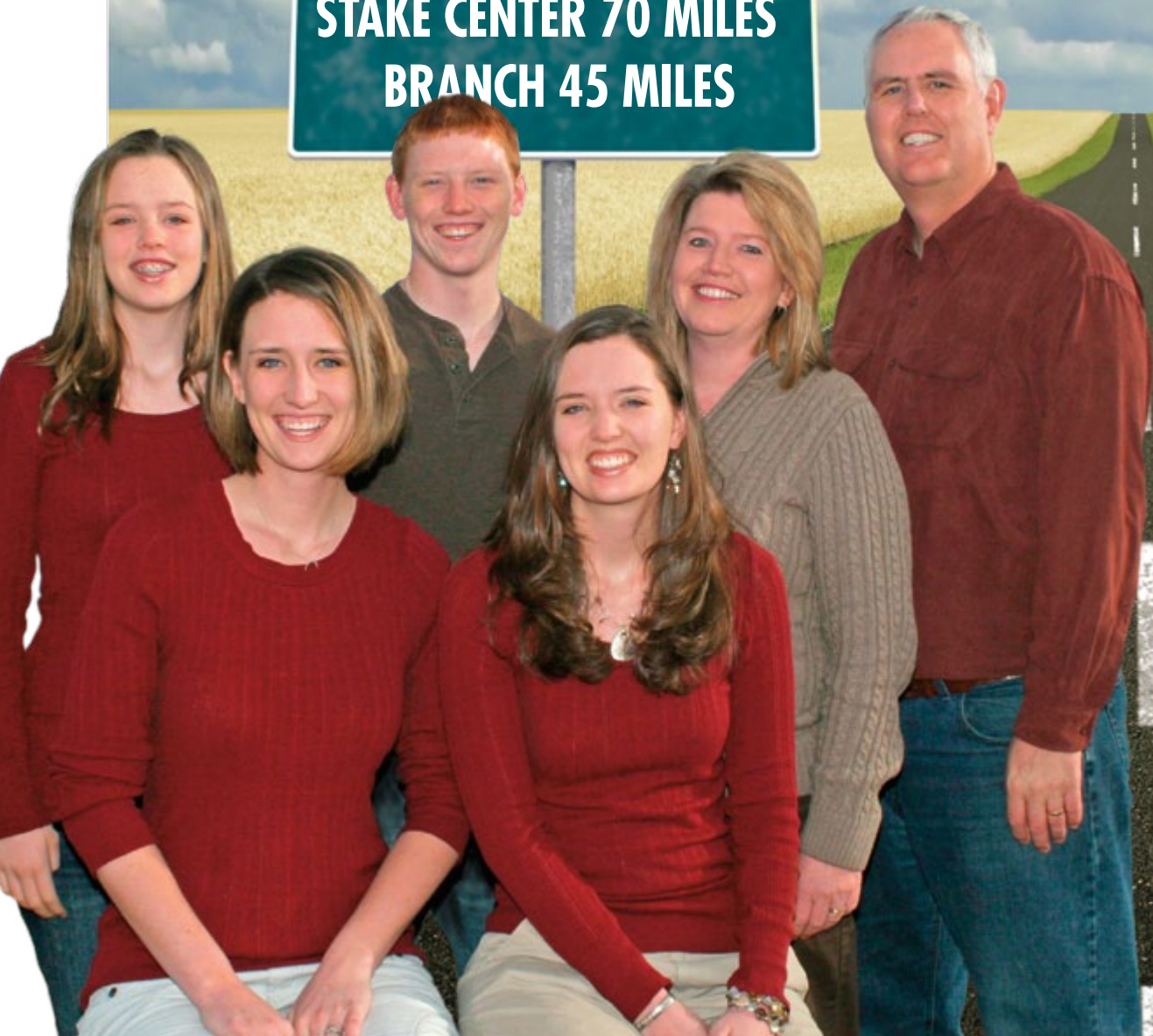
From then on, the Spirit labored with him and testified of the truth through numerous spiritual experiences. "I'd feel the burning again while I was alone in my apartment," Marcelino says. "When I would open the window, I'd see the elders nearby on a corner teaching people about the Church. I could feel when they were close, and I began to take seriously what they were teaching me."

Marcelino received a warm welcome when he began attending church. He was baptized a short while later on April 22—the exact day the missionaries had named three months earlier. Today, after serving nine years as president of the Ushuaia district, he serves as the second counselor in the presidency of the Buenos Aires north mission.

"When we read that the Lord will 'send forth [His] word unto the ends of the earth' [D&C 112:4], that's Ushuaia," says President Tossen. "Ushuaia *is* the end of the earth. But for those like me who found the gospel here, it's the beginning of everything. Here you'll find the lighthouse at the end of the world. But here is where I found faith and the lighthouse of the Lord." ■

# Decisions

STAKE CENTER 70 MILES  
BRANCH 45 MILES





That Make a

# Difference

By Melissa Merrill  
Church Magazines

*Seventy miles to the stake center. Forty-five miles to the branch meetinghouse. For this Kansas family, living far away brought them closer to God—and each other.*



**W**hen Tommy and Mickie Crowther and their two-year-old daughter moved to Centralia, Kansas, USA, in 1988, they were surprised to learn that the nearest branch of the Church, with some 25 members, was 45 miles (72 km) away.

Both Tommy and Mickie had grown up in the western United States in areas where there were large Latter-day Saint populations, and they hoped to return there and live near their extended family. But they quickly began to feel that their branch in Kansas was exactly where their family was supposed to be, so they stayed.

The Crowthers have now lived in Centralia nearly 25 years and have raised their four children—Heidi, Katie, Jake, and Jenny—in the small, rural community. And while living in an area somewhat isolated from other Church members has been challenging, the Crowthers say it has also been an amazing opportunity.

The branch that the Crowther family belongs to

## DOCTRINAL CONNECTIONS

How are the following doctrines addressed in the article?

- Family relationships can last for eternity.
- Divine bonds between family members are forged as they do positive things together.
- A Christ-centered home is a place of refuge, healing, defense against sin, and love.

*The Crowther family puts priority on attending activities that are not only fun but spiritually enriching as well, such as a youth conference trek the children participated in (right).*



currently has about 30 people attending. That number has ranged from 20 to 70 over the years and continues to change. Distance and branch size have created challenges and required the family to make sacrifices, as such circumstances have for many Latter-day Saints. But no matter how small the unit or how remote the location, Tommy and Mickie believe that several key decisions have been essential in raising their family to be strong in the gospel.

### Decide to Participate

For the first few years of living in Kansas, the Crowthers could make the trip to the meetinghouse only once a week, for their Sunday meetings. “We were paying off

school loans, and we didn’t have the money to make the trip more often than that, such as for weeknight Relief Society meetings,” Mickie explains. “But as time went on, as our children got older and our finances improved, we decided to have them at every activity that we could.”

“Making the effort to be there has made a huge difference,” Tommy says. “One of the major blessings of living in this area has been our stake, which has always been fantastic about supporting the youth. Our children have developed friendships with other teens in the stake, and the stake leaders have loved and supported them.”

The stake has also provided meaningful, spiritual activities that bless the lives of the youth.

“We wouldn’t drive as far as we do just for a fun activity,” Mickie says. “We can find fun activities closer to home. But we go to Church activities because the stake provides things that feed our children spiritually, build them, and help them be stronger. That means a lot.”

Stake leadership has also been considerate in ways that facilitate participation, Tommy says. “Stake leaders have been sensitive to our situation and have done things like scheduling a seminary meeting just before a stake dance so that those of us traveling long distances don’t have to make extra trips,” he continues. “But none of those things would have happened if we hadn’t decided to participate and make participation a possibility for our children.”





## Teach Your Children in the Home

The Crowthers are grateful to be part of a branch that is “small but strong,” as Tommy describes it, but he and Mickie admit that they have sometimes worried about how their children may face the influences of the world when they don’t have a large youth group in their branch to lean on.

“I remember as a young mother being concerned about my children being taught the gospel when our branch was so small and programs were sometimes limited,” she says. “Then I realized that it was *our*—my and Tommy’s—responsibility to make sure that our family learned the gospel. It wasn’t Church leaders’ responsibility—it was ours. What our children learned at church could support what we were teaching in the home; we made sure we were reading the Book of Mormon, holding family home evening, and teaching the gospel consistently.”

## Follow the Guidelines of the Church

Mickie takes comfort in reading the New Testament and seeing how Paul wrote to different branches of the Church “to make sure everyone was still on track,” as she says.

“Even though we’re in a small branch, we want to have the true gospel for our children here. To do that, it’s very important for us to follow the guidelines of the Church as found in the Church handbook. The handbook is for us today what those epistles were for members in the time of the New Testament.”

Seminary is one area where following official Church guidelines has been important for the Crowthers. “We have had seminary in our home,” explains Mickie, who was called and set apart as a seminary teacher. “Every morning, it’s me and one of our children.



*Strong Church programs like Young Women camp (above) and Mutual activities (below) have strengthened the Crowther family, but Tommy and Mickie realize that the primary responsibility for teaching their children lies in the home.*



Sometimes it’s a struggle. Sometimes the child doesn’t like mornings. But I take the time and effort to teach as I would teach at church, with preparation and visual aids and scripture mastery. I’ve tried to give them the full experience.”

In following the policies of the Church, the Crowther family has been blessed by its programs. “The projects and programs our children have participated in have given them opportunities to stand out in positive ways in our community, where we’re very much a curiosity as members of the Church,” Mickie adds.



## IT BEGINS AT HOME

“The responsibility of building leadership in the Church belongs to the father and the mother. As youth grow and mature through their teenage years and move toward adulthood, the Church picks up an important role in this process of giving youth an opportunity to lead, but it begins in the home.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, in “Tending the Flock: Teaching Leadership Skills to Youth,” *Ensign*, June 2008, 16.

*Sunday meetings are held many miles away from the Crowthers' home, but the sacrifices the family makes to attend their meetings with their branch (pictured here in 2005) bring them together as a family and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ.*



### **Use Your Time Well**

“Our children knew that anytime we were going to the stake center, it would be 70 miles each way,” says Tommy. “Going to a Church meeting could take the whole day or at least the whole afternoon. That was a challenge at first, but then we decided to use that travel time for good. I would drive, and Mickie would read. Our children came to love that and even look forward to that family time, that teaching time.”

“I used to worry that we were participating in Church things at the cost of family things,” Mickie remembers. “But now we’ve realized that the Church things have *become* the family things. With careful planning, our times together coming and going from Church meetings and activities have been some of our best family experiences.”

### **Maintain Standards**

For a long time, the Crowthers were the only members of the Church in their county. “None of our children have ever had another member attending their school with them,” says Mickie. “They’ve had to stand on their own. But because of the decisions they’ve made to maintain their standards, others have looked to them to maintain those standards. If

they let down their guard, others will question them.”

One difficult decision for the Crowther children involved participation in athletic events. “One of our daughters is a good volleyball player and wanted to play club volleyball, which is held on Sunday afternoons,” Tommy explains. “We talked about the decision and the consequences with her and even went to tryouts. We told her we would support her in her decision. It was probably one of the hardest decisions she had made at that point in her life, so when she told us that she had decided not to participate, that meant a lot. I knew how much she wanted it. I also knew why she didn’t do it, and that told me that her priorities were right.

“When you have that kind of experience or walk by your child’s room at night and see them reading their scriptures—not because you’re making them but because they’re doing it on their own—that helps you as a parent know that the things you’re doing are working.”

### **Build Family Unity**

Ultimately, no matter how supportive Church leaders are or how meaningful activities may be, for the Crowthers, the efforts—and the payoff—are most significant at home.

Efforts in the home involve not only consistency but also creativity, Mickie says. “We play a lot of games with our family,” she explains. “When there’s going to be a big party that our teens know they shouldn’t go to, we plan something special. By doing something fun at home, we help them feel like they’re not missing out.”





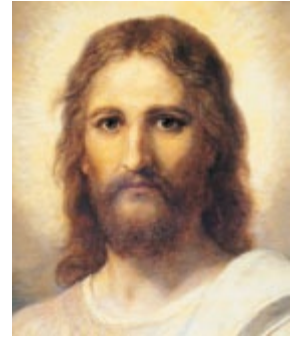
The fun activities are complemented by shared spiritual experiences, Tommy says. “When our oldest daughters were attending Brigham Young University, we went to visit them. Our youngest was then 12, so we went to the Provo Utah Temple to do baptisms. That was a special experience we shared,” he recalls.

Such activities build family unity, and as a result, Tommy and Mickie have watched their children become each others’ best support.

Both Tommy and Mickie believe that all of these efforts and important decisions

are centered on the family. “Being together forever with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is our biggest goal. That’s why we do everything we can to have the gospel in our home and in our lives,” Tommy says.

“Yes, there are sacrifices involved in living the gospel and in Church participation when you live in a remote area, as we do,” Mickie says. “But we’d do anything we can to make it possible for us to be together forever. When it comes down to it, this is the only thing that really matters.” ■



*“Being together forever with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is our biggest goal. That’s why we do everything we can to have the gospel in our home and in our lives,” Brother Crowther says.*

## HOW SENIOR MISSIONARIES HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE

“Senior missionaries have made a huge difference in the lives of our branch members and especially our family,” Mickie Crowther says. Often the elders have served in the branch presidency and the sisters have served in an auxiliary presidency. But wherever they have served in the branch, Mickie says, “they have been so much help.”

Several couples have served in the community in the last 20 years, and their influence has been lasting. “When you’ve been here so long and the group is so small, it’s really nice to have someone fresh come in with new enthusiasm,” Mickie



says. She recalls one sister in particular who made everything—no matter what it was—a lot of fun. This sister encouraged branch members to socialize more and know one another better.

“She started a ward choir and even brought cinnamon rolls when we rehearsed,” Mickie recalls. “Before that, we didn’t have a choir. And even though we weren’t very good, those of us who

went had a great experience. In fact, the choir grew so big that when we sang on Sunday, we didn’t have anyone to sing to—all of us were in the choir!

“We all felt we would do anything for this sister because of what she did for us.”

These couples, Mickie says, have lifted many burdens for individuals, families, and their small branch.

They’ve been grandparents to the children and youth. They’ve been good friends to the adults and have offered support and encouragement. They’ve been able to reach less-active members in ways no one else could. And after their service is complete, they remain lifelong friends with the members from their mission.

“They are wonderful,” says Mickie. “We know that they come at great sacrifice, both family-wise and emotionally. We know that they come at personal expense. I can’t say enough how much we would like to have senior missionaries in our area all of the time. They’ll never know what a difference they have made in our lives.”





# How Could She Let Him Go?

*I learned a surprising lesson when  
my sister placed her baby for adoption.*



When my younger sister, Lauren,\* told me she was pregnant, I couldn't have been more upset for her. She had just come from telling the baby's father, who had abdicated any responsibility, and she was devastated. All I could do was hold her while she cried.

### Lauren's Decision

After talking to our mother, Lauren decided to see a counselor at LDS Family Services and begin procedures to place her baby for adoption. I was appalled. How could she think about giving up her baby? He had a family! Her decision split our family down the middle. My parents and one sister supported the adoption, and my other two sisters were as opposed as I was. I was so angry that most days I stayed away from our apartment. How could she possibly feel good about abandoning her baby to strangers?

My mother and sister Jennifer arrived to be with Lauren the day before her due date. There was no one else to take them to the hospital the next morning, so despite my resolve not to participate, I found myself walking down the long, sterile corridors of the maternity ward.

The doctor looked somber as he came out of the operating room. He said, "Lauren will be back to her room in about half an hour, but the baby was sent to the intensive care unit. He is having difficulty breathing."

My mother and I headed to the intensive care unit while Jennifer waited for Lauren to come out of recovery. A nurse motioned us to an incubator where I looked into the face of my new nephew. He looked just like Lauren. I had been praying that she would change her mind and keep him, but now I just prayed he would live.

As my mother and I stood vigil the third morning, the nurse said, "You know it's not too late to back out of the adoption." I saw a steady stream of tears falling down my mother's cheeks. For the first time I realized I wasn't the only one hurting. "I don't know how we'll be able to do this," she said.



### A GREATER OPPORTUNITY

"When marriage is not possible, experience has shown that adoption, difficult though this may be for the young mother, may afford a greater opportunity for the child to live a life of happiness. Wise and experienced professional counselors and prayerful bishops can assist in these circumstances."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Save the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 53.

### One Day with Ryan

Ryan—that was what Lauren had decided to call him. We would get only one day with him before his adoptive parents took custody.

It was almost noon by the time we got everything situated at the hospital the day Lauren and Ryan were released, and we only had him until six o'clock that evening. We had decided to pack a picnic lunch and take him to the park. It was a lovely day, and we enjoyed watching him eat and stretch and sleep. He was so contented and sweet. I kept thinking there was no way I could go through with this. I had never known love like I felt for that tiny baby. He wasn't even mine, but how could I let him go?

When we arrived at LDS Family Services, I lifted Ryan out of his car seat and eased him into Lauren's lap, and she cuddled him. We sat there drinking in these last precious moments that would have to last a lifetime.

Lauren handed him to me so she could get out of the car. I had the impulse to run, but before I could, the door to the office opened and a social worker came to greet us. Then something amazing happened. I stepped out of my dark world, over the building threshold, and into the warmth of what I imagine heaven will be like. That's the only way I can explain it. The room was enveloped in the sweetest, warmest spirit I have ever felt. The adoptive parents had an aura about them that melted my heart. I knew they were meant to be Ryan's parents.

My sister made the right choice. She would have struggled just to put food on the table if she had kept Ryan. She loved him but could not have given him the choicest gift—that of a temple sealing to his parents. I'm thankful my sister's vision saw beyond her loss, that her ears heeded a prophet's counsel, and that the healing power of the Atonement can comfort us in our deepest sorrows. ■

For additional information about adoption services, contact LDS Family Services at 800-537-2229, or visit [www.ldsfamilyservices.org](http://www.ldsfamilyservices.org).

*\*All names have been changed.*

# I Thought It Was All Nonsense

*I thought if I could just prove the elders wrong, I could get Sundays back for me and my family.*

By Umberto Gilardi

When I met the Latter-day Saint woman who would become my wife, I wasn't very interested in church—any church. But I *was* interested in Angie, so I sometimes attended services with her. This continued after our marriage, although I usually attended only sacrament meeting. I rarely stayed for priesthood meeting because I couldn't be with my wife and I didn't have any idea of what was going on. Even when I did understand, I thought it was all nonsense. During that part of the meeting block, I sat in the car.

One Sunday the missionaries approached me after sacrament meeting. I knew about the missionaries because my wife's parents often had them over for dinner. Wanting to be supportive of Angie, I invited them to our home for dinner. Over the next month, the elders and I became friends. One day they invited me to participate in the missionary discussions. I agreed, but only because I planned to quickly prove them wrong.

When we met, I bickered with them and picked at things they said. Finally, Elder Wilkins closed the Book of Mormon he was holding and said, "We can't teach you if you're just going to argue with us."

I was thrilled. I had won! They were giving up, I thought. I expected that within two weeks, tops, Angie would stop going to church and our family's Sundays would no longer be taken up with religion.

The next day, I drove Angie to work and then returned home. As I sat down, I spotted a copy of the Book of Mormon on the coffee table. I threw it under the table, but

it bothered me to leave it there. I picked it back up, and as I sat there looking at it, I thought, "If it's true, then it will change my life. If it's not true, I will have lost only a small amount of time trying to find out."

I had never been a reader. My family moved from Italy to Scotland when I was young, and I often mixed up Italian and English, which made learning to read difficult. By the time I got to secondary school, it seemed a lost cause.

So it was with some apprehension that I picked up the book and read several passages the elders had marked, including the promise in Moroni (see Moroni 10:3–5). To my astonishment, I read with perfect clarity and understanding. I read Moroni's promise and then reread it. I decided I must "ask God" (Moroni 10:4).

I went upstairs and prayed. "God, if you tell me this book is true, then I'll join this church and I'll be the man you want me to be." I didn't see any lights, but something went through me. The Holy Ghost confirmed that the Book of Mormon was true and that I should join the Church. And then this clear thought entered my mind and heart: "I want you to have the priesthood." I didn't know what the priesthood was (other than that meeting I habitually skipped), but I was determined to find out and seek it.

I called the missionaries and told them I wanted to be baptized. They were understandably shocked. I told them of my experience and asked them about the priesthood. As I met with them over the next few weeks, my questions were answered and my testimony grew.





One time the missionaries brought over a video of a conference address by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). In the video, President Hinckley addressed every single point on which I had argued with the missionaries before. I felt as though the prophet were speaking directly to me. This experience further confirmed my decision to be baptized.

When I was baptized and then received the Holy Ghost the next day at church, I recognized my dependence on Heavenly Father and on faith in Jesus Christ. I was filled with a warm, wonderful feeling, as though I was being given a reassuring hug.

I later received the priesthood. I learned that it came through Jesus Christ and that by living a virtuous life, I would be able to exercise the power of the priesthood whenever He needed me to.

I have had powerful experiences in exercising the priesthood authority that have blessed my life and the lives of my family and friends. I can attest that in very real ways, holding the priesthood has made me a better man.

My wife, our daughter, and I were sealed May 27, 2000, in the Preston England Temple, and a son was later born to us in the covenant. By allowing Christ to be the focal point of my life, I am able to be a better husband and father than I would have been had I not joined His Church. I am so grateful that the Lord led me to His restored gospel through the Book of Mormon and a desire to learn about the priesthood. ■



**By Elder  
Jeffrey R. Holland**

Of the Quorum of the  
Twelve Apostles

# STANDING TOGETHER

for the Cause of Christ

*This article is excerpted from an address delivered in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on March 10, 2011, to a group of national Christian leaders.*

**F**riends, you know what I know—that there is in the modern world so much sin and moral decay affecting everyone, especially the young, and it seems to be getting worse by the day. You and I share so many concerns about the spread of pornography and poverty, abuse and abortion, illicit sexual transgression (both heterosexual and homosexual), violence, crudity, cruelty, and temptation, all glaring as close as your daughter’s cell phone or your son’s iPad.

Surely there is a way for people of goodwill who love God and have taken upon themselves the name of Christ to stand together for the cause of Christ and against the forces of sin. In this we have every right to be bold and believing, for “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

You serve and preach, teach and labor in that confidence, and so do I. And in doing so, I believe we can trust in the next verse from Romans as well: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

***Are Latter-day Saints Christians? Of course we are. As Elder Holland explains, “We believe in the historical Jesus who walked the dusty paths of the Holy Land and declare that He is one and the same God as the divine Jehovah of the Old Testament.”***

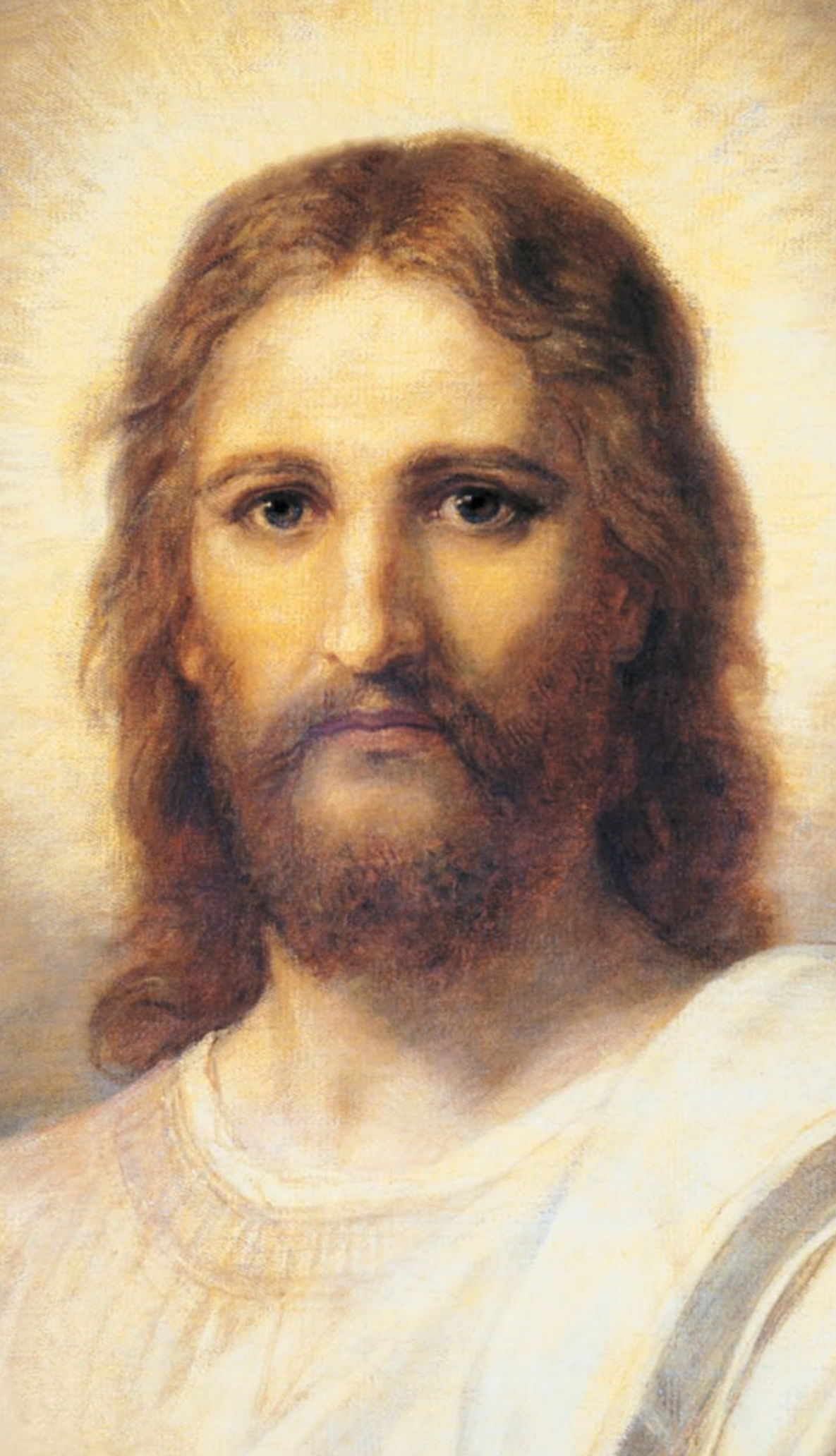
I truly believe that if across the world we can all try harder *not* to separate *each other* from the “love of Christ,” we will be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:32, 35, 37).

## Theological Dialogue

Evangelicals and Latter-day Saints have not always met on peaceful terms. From the time in the early 19th century when Joseph Smith came from his youthful revelatory epiphany and made his bold declaration regarding it, our exchanges have too often been anything but cordial.

And yet, strangely enough—and I cannot help but believe this to be a part of a divine orchestration of events in these troubled times—LDS and evangelical academics and church figures have been drawn together since the late 1990s in what I think has become a provocative and constructive theological dialogue. It has been an honest effort to understand and be understood, an endeavor to dispel myths and misrepresentations on *both* sides, a labor of love in which the participants have felt motivated by and moved upon with a quiet force deeper and





*Surely there is a way for people of goodwill who love God and have taken upon themselves the name of Christ to stand together for the cause of Christ and against the forces of sin.*

more profound than a typical interfaith exchange.

The first of those formal dialogues took place in the spring of 2000 at Brigham Young University. As the dialogue began to take shape, it was apparent that the participants were searching for a paradigm of some sort, a model, a point of reference. Were these to be confrontations, arguments, debates? Were they to produce a winner and a loser? Just how candid and earnest were they expected to be? Some of the Latter-day Saints wondered: Do the “other guys” see these conversations as our “tryouts” for a place on the Christian team? Is it a grand effort to “fix” Mormonism, to make it more traditionally Christian, more acceptable to skeptical onlookers?

In turn, some of the evangelicals wondered: Are those “other guys” for real, or is this just another form of their missionary proselytizing? Can a person be a New Testament Christian and yet not subscribe to later creeds that most of traditional Christianity adopted? A question that continued to come up on both sides was just how much “bad theology” can the grace of God compensate for? Before too long, those kinds of issues became part of the dialogue itself, and in the process, the tension began to dissipate.

The initial feeling of formality has given way to a much more amiable informality, a true form of brotherhood and sisterhood, with a kindness in disagreement, a respect for opposing views, a feeling of responsibility to truly understand (if not necessarily agree with) those of other faiths—a responsibility to represent one’s doctrines and practices accurately and grasp that of others in the same way. The dialogues came to enjoy “convicted civility.”<sup>1</sup>



***We would be eager to join hands with our evangelical friends in a united Christian effort to strengthen families and marriages, to demand more morality in media, to provide humane relief effort in times of natural disasters, to address the ever-present plight of the poor, and to guarantee the freedom of religion that will allow all of us to speak out on matters of Christian conscience.***

Realizing that Latter-day Saints have quite a different hierarchal and organizational structure than the vast evangelical world, no official representative of the Church has participated in these talks, nor have there been any ecclesiastical overtones to them. Like you, we have no desire to compromise our doctrinal distinctiveness or forfeit the beliefs that make us who we are. We are eager, however, not to be misunderstood, not to be accused of beliefs we do not hold, and not to have our commitment to Christ and His gospel dismissed out of hand, to say nothing of being demonized in the process.

Furthermore, we are always looking for common ground and common partners in the “hands-on” work of the ministry. We would be eager to join hands with our evangelical friends in a united Christian effort to strengthen families and marriages, to demand more morality in media, to provide humane relief effort in times of natural disasters, to address the ever-present plight of the poor, and to guarantee the freedom of religion that will allow all of us to speak out on matters of Christian conscience regarding the social issues of our time. In this latter regard the day must never come that you or I or any other responsible cleric in this nation is forbidden to preach from his or her pulpit the doctrine one holds to be true. But in light of recent sociopolitical events and current legal challenges stemming from them, particularly regarding the sanctity of marriage, that day could come unless we act decisively in preventing it.<sup>2</sup>

The larger and more united the Christian voice, the more likely we are to carry the day in these matters. In that regard we should remember the Savior’s warning regarding “a





*For more information about Latter-day Saints being Christians, see "About Mormons" under Frequently Asked Questions at [Mormon.org](http://Mormon.org); "Christianity: Following Jesus in Word and Deed" under News Releases at [MormonNewsroom.org](http://MormonNewsroom.org); and Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Prophet's Testimony," *Ensign*, May 1993, 93.*

house divided against [itself]"—a house that finds it cannot stand against more united foes pursuing an often unholy agenda (see Luke 11:17).

### **The Christ We Revere**

Building on some of this history and desirous that we not disagree where we don't need to disagree, I wish to testify to you, our friends, of the Christ we revere and adore in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We believe in the historical Jesus who walked the dusty paths of the Holy Land and declare that He is one and the same God as the divine Jehovah of the Old Testament. We declare Him to be both fully God in His divinity and fully human in His mortal experience, the Son who was a God and the God who was a Son; that He is, in the language of the Book of Mormon, "the Eternal God" (title page of the Book of Mormon).

We testify that He is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the Three being One: one in spirit, one in strength, one in purpose, one in voice, one in glory, one in will, one in goodness, and one in grace—one in every conceivable form and facet of unity *except* that of Their separate physical embodiment (see 3 Nephi 11:36). We testify that Christ was born of His divine Father and a virgin mother, that from the age of 12 onward, He was about His true Father's business, that in doing so, He lived a perfect, sinless life and thus provided a pattern for all who come unto Him for salvation.

We bear witness of every sermon He ever gave, every prayer He ever uttered, every miracle He ever called down from heaven, and every redeeming act He ever performed. In this latter regard we testify that in fulfilling the divine plan for our salvation, He took upon Himself all the sins, sorrows, and sicknesses of the world, bleeding at every pore in the anguish of it all, beginning in Gethsemane and dying upon the cross of Calvary as a vicarious offering for those sins and sinners, including each of us.

Early in the Book of Mormon a Nephite prophet "saw that [Jesus] was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 11:33). Later that same Lord affirmed: "Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:13–14; see also D&C 76:40–42). Indeed, it is a gift of the Spirit "to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world" (D&C 46:13).

We declare that three days after the Crucifixion, He rose from the tomb in glorious immortality, the firstfruits of the Resurrection, thereby breaking the physical bands of death and the spiritual bonds of hell, providing an immortal future for both the body and the spirit, a future that can be realized in its full glory and grandeur only by accepting Him and His name as the only "name under heaven given

*It is a gift of the Spirit “to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.”*



among men, whereby we must be saved.” Neither is there, nor can there ever be, “salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12).

We declare that He will come again to earth, this time in might, majesty, and glory, to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is the Christ, whom we praise, in whose grace we trust implicitly and explicitly, and who is “the Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

Joseph Smith was once asked the question, “What are the fundamental principles of your religion?” He replied, “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”<sup>3</sup>

As a rule, Latter-day Saints are known as an industrious people, a works-conscious people. For us, the works of righteousness, what we might call “dedicated discipleship,” are an unerring measure of the reality of our faith. We believe with James, the brother of Jesus, that true faith always manifests itself in faithfulness (see James 2). We teach that those Puritans were closer to the truth than they realized when they expected a “godly walk” (D&C 20:69) from those under covenant.

Salvation and eternal life are free (see 2 Nephi 2:4); indeed, they are the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 6:13; 14:7). Nevertheless, we teach that one must prepare to receive those gifts by declaring and demonstrating

“faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” (Articles of Faith 1:4)—by trusting in and relying upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8; see also 2 Nephi 31:19; Moroni 6:4). For us, the fruits of that faith include repentance, the receipt of gospel covenants and ordinances (including baptism), and a heart of gratitude that motivates us to deny ourselves of all ungodliness, to “take up [our] cross daily” (Luke 9:23), and to keep His commandments—*all* of His commandments (see John 14:15). We rejoice with the Apostle Paul: “Thanks be to God, [who] giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). In that spirit, as one Book of Mormon prophet wrote, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins . . . [and] may look forward unto that life which is in Christ” (2 Nephi 25:26, 27).

I hope this witness I bear to you and to the world helps you understand something of the inexpressible love we feel for the Savior of the world in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **A Call to Christian Conscience**

Given our shared devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and given the challenges we face in our society, surely we can find a way to unite in a national—or international—call to Christian conscience. Some years ago Tim LaHaye wrote:



“If religious Americans work together in the name of our mutually shared moral concerns, we just might succeed in re-establishing the civic moral standards that our forefathers thought were guaranteed by the [United States] Constitution. . . .

“ . . . All of our nation’s religious citizens need to develop a respect for other religious people and their beliefs. We need not accept their beliefs, but we can respect the people and realize that we have more in common with each other than we ever will with the secularizers of this country. It is time for all religiously committed citizens to unite against our common enemy.”<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, there is a risk associated with learning something new about someone else. New insights always affect old perspectives, and thus some rethinking, rearranging, and restructuring of our worldviews is inevitable. When we look beyond people’s color, ethnic group, social circle, church, synagogue, mosque, creed, and statement of belief, and when we try our best to see them for who and what they are—children of the same God—something good and worthwhile happens within us, and we are thereby drawn into a closer union with that God who is the Father of us all.

Few things are more needed in this tense and confused world than Christian conviction, Christian compassion, and Christian understanding. Joseph Smith observed in 1843, less than a year before his death: “If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by the force of reasoning, for truth will cut its own



***“Do you believe in Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation which He revealed?” asked the Prophet Joseph Smith. “So do I. Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst; and they will do it before the millennium can be ushered in and Christ takes possession of His kingdom.”***

way. Do you believe in Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation which He revealed? So do I. Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst; and they will do it before the millennium can be ushered in and Christ takes possession of His kingdom.”<sup>5</sup>

I close with the love for you expressed by two valedictories in our scripture. First this from the New Testament author of Hebrews:

“[May] the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20–21).

And this from the Book of Mormon, a father writing to his son:

“Be faithful in Christ . . . [and] may [He] lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death . . . and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

“And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen” (Moroni 9:25–26). ■

#### NOTES

1. A term introduced in Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (1992).
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Preserving Religious Freedom” (speech, Chapman University School of Law, Feb. 4, 2011), [newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-religious-freedom-Chapman-University](http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-religious-freedom-Chapman-University).
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.
4. Tim LaHaye, *The Race for the 21st Century* (1986), 109.
5. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:499.

# Treasure

## IN THIS CITY

By Jane Nickerson

*Everyone  
in our  
new town  
had lived  
there forever.  
Everyone  
was related to  
everyone else.  
Everyone  
attended  
the local  
Protestant  
churches.  
Everyone  
but us.*

I did a great deal of growing up in a single moment on a Mississippi hilltop. Mississippi looks celestial in the spring, with its trees dripping with wisteria and blossoms billowing everywhere. Due to the way I was feeling, however, spring seemed less than heavenly.

Our family had recently moved to a small town in Mississippi, USA, for my husband's job. He was busy with his new responsibilities, and he was rarely home. I, meanwhile, cared for our three young children and was so lonely I could hardly bear it. I was used to having a happy network of other Latter-day Saint mothers to visit with and to take turns babysitting each others' children. Here, the closest Latter-day Saint families lived nearly an hour away, and I could see no prospect of making friends in my town. It seemed like everyone had lived there forever, was related to everyone else, and attended the local Protestant churches—everyone but us. It was easy to feel like the community was closed to us.

I had tried to reach out to people in the neighborhood by introducing myself and our children at houses that had toys in the yard, but it felt like no one needed anyone new in their life. I would catch myself chatting too long at the checkout counter of the grocery store or at the circulation desk of the library and then feel like a fool. I lived for the hour my husband came home from work and for

Sundays, when we would make the long drive to church and I could talk to other adults.

I tried to fill the empty ache of loneliness by teaching and playing with our children. I searched the scriptures more than ever before, seeking comfort and guidance. I spent long moments in prayer because Heavenly Father was someone I could *always* talk to. So far away from friends and family, I felt myself slowly growing closer and closer to Him.

Early each morning before my husband left for work, I would go for long walks, thinking and praying as I hiked the woods and hills around our home. One day I climbed farther and farther until at last I stood exhausted at the very top of a hill. I fell to my knees. As I prayed, warmth flooded over me, and I knew—I *knew*—that God was with me.

Two thoughts came into my mind. One was the words of a poem my grandfather used to quote titled “When God Wants a Man.”<sup>1</sup> It says that when the Lord wants to mold a person “to play the noblest part,” He “makes him lonely so that only God’s high messages shall reach him.” I felt that this was happening to me, and oh, I wanted to hear those “high messages”!

The other thought was what I had read in Doctrine and Covenants 111:2 earlier that morning. I had read it without really paying attention, thinking of it only as it applied to Church history, but now it leaped into my





mind: “I have much treasure in this city for you.” In that moment I knew that we would be fine in this town, that the Lord had sent us here for a reason, and that I would be equal to the task.

I took action immediately to get to know people. I decided that the key to breaking down the social barriers was to serve. I joined a charitable organization called the Junior Auxiliary, a historical society, and a local homemakers’ club. I offered to work in the nursery for a couple of the churches during their Bible School week and met people that way. I enrolled my four-year-old in a preschool and then invited his classmates over for playdates so that I could meet their mothers. From there, friendships developed much more quickly than I would have thought possible a few weeks earlier.

We lived in Mississippi for 24 years and met many wonderful people. Our children grew up as southerners, and we were known as “that big Mormon family.” When our teenagers were involved in a terrible automobile accident a few years ago, several of the local churches prayed for our family during their Sunday services. Offers of help poured into our home. The whole town put its arms around us during our difficult time.

There was indeed “much treasure” in that city, but in those early days I had to wade through my own loneliness to find it. And all the while, as I was wading, Heavenly Father held me by the hand, gently leading. As I poured out my heart in prayer to Him that spring morning, He knew I was finally ready to listen to His message for me. He poured comfort and inspiration into my heart to fill my needs. That lesson about His tender mercies and the power of prayer has never left me. ■

**NOTE**

1. Angela Morgan, in Scott T. Brown, ed., *It Can Be Done: Poems for Hardship, Sacrifice and Dominion* (2009), 24–28.

# The Sacrament

## REMEMBERING THE SAVIOR

**T**he sacrament is a sacred priesthood ordinance performed each Sunday. Jesus Christ instituted this ordinance when He was on the earth and restored it in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith. “The ordinance of the sacrament,” said Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “makes the sacrament meeting the most sacred and important meeting in the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

The Lord has commanded us to meet together and take the sacrament each Sunday (see D&C 20:75). Aaronic Priesthood holders bless and pass the bread and water to members of the congregation, who take the sacrament in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In doing so, they recommit to live the covenants they made with God when they were baptized. Specifically, they promise to always remember Jesus Christ, to take His name upon them, and to keep His commandments (see D&C 20:77).

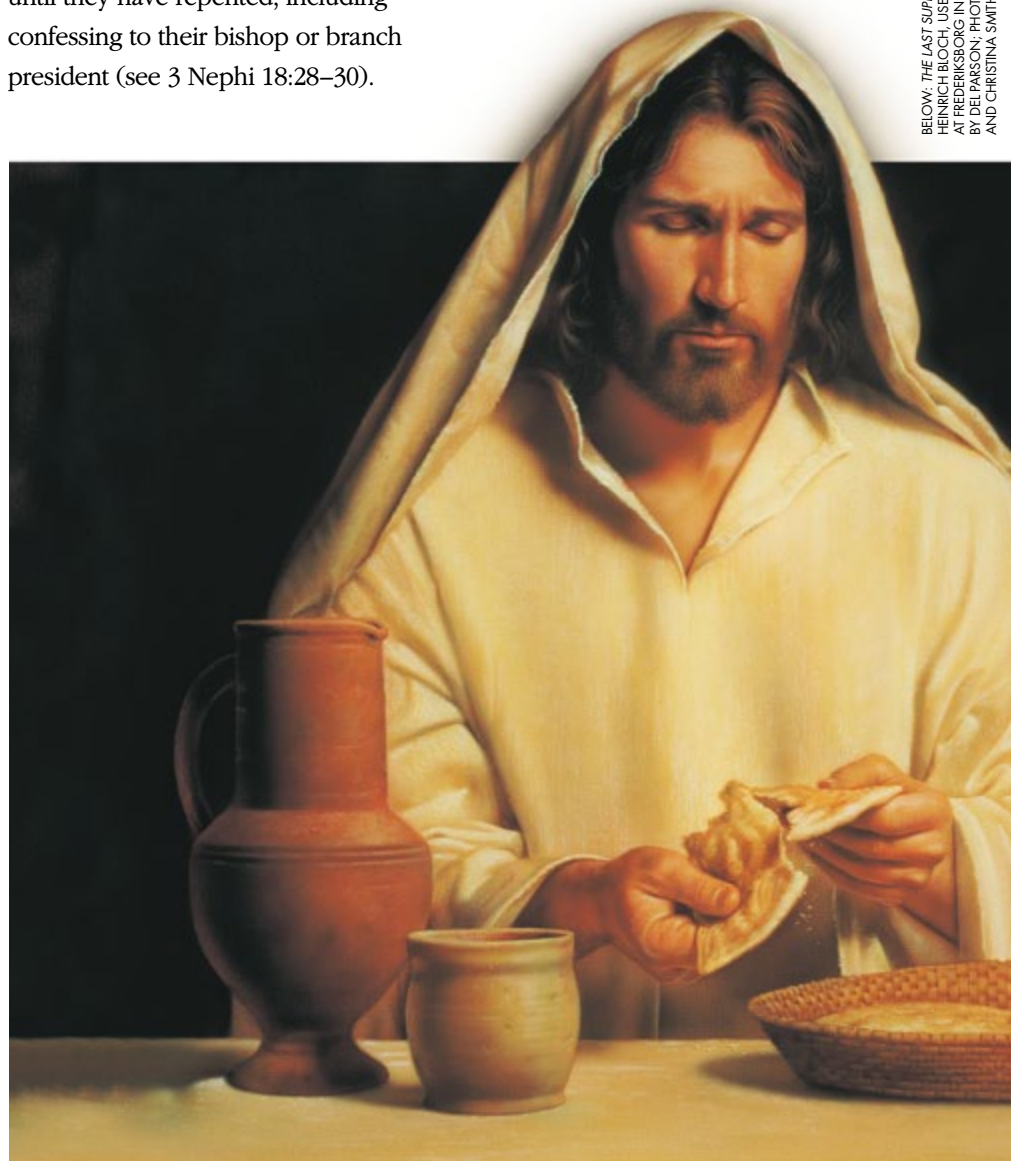
Proper preparation to take the sacrament includes repenting, desiring

to follow the Savior, and having a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). Taking the sacrament is a weekly opportunity for introspection and rededication. Reverence and prayer enhance the experience. Individuals who have committed serious sins should not take the sacrament until they have repented, including confessing to their bishop or branch president (see 3 Nephi 18:28–30).

Worthily partaking of the sacrament brings great blessings, such as forgiveness of sins, the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and sanctification—being made holy—through the Atonement. ■

#### NOTE

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 17.



BELOW: THE LAST SUPPER. BY SIMON DEWEY. RIGHT: THE LAST SUPPER. BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH. USED BY PERMISSION OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC MUSEUM AT FREDERIKSBORG IN HILLERÖD, DENMARK. MAY NOT BE COPIED. PAINTING BY DEL PARSON. PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDWIN REDRINO, ROBERT MILNE, AND CRISTINA SMITH.

For more information, see 1 Corinthians 11:23–30; Doctrine and Covenants 27:2.



1. Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament among His Twelve Apostles on the night before His Crucifixion (see Luke 22:19–20).



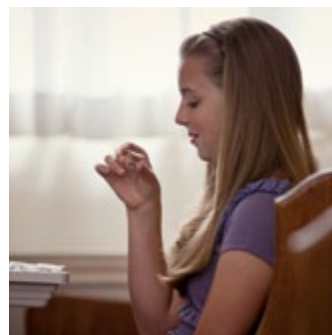
2. After His Resurrection, the Savior instituted the sacrament in the Americas (see 3 Nephi 18:1–11).



3. Holders of the Aaronic Priesthood prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament under the direction of the bishop or branch president.



4. During sacrament meeting, we concentrate on worship and refrain from behavior that would distract others.



5. We remember the Savior's life, example, teachings, and Atonement as we reverently take the sacrament.

“We acknowledge that all of us make mistakes. Each of us has a need to confess and forsake our sins and errors to our Heavenly Father and to others we may have offended. The Sabbath provides us with a precious opportunity to offer up these—our sacraments—to the Lord.”

**Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Sabbath and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 8.**

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Those who are not familiar with our Sunday meetings might wonder if those of other faiths can attend our worship services and take the sacrament. All are welcome to attend church with us. The sacrament is intended to help members renew their covenants, but if taking the sacrament helps visitors worship, they are welcome to do so.

# FINDING POWER IN

*These members testify that scriptures have the power to change lives.*

Prophets and apostles have assured us that as we face the trials of mortality, we can find strength, comfort, and peace in the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “I testify as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . that the gospel is true, and that it offers the answers to all personal and collective challenges the children of God have on this earth today.”<sup>1</sup>

Our individual circumstances may vary, but we can each turn to a divine source of power—the scriptures. Below, Church members share their testimonies of the power they have felt by “feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20).

## Overcoming Weakness

Since he was a child, Wayne Hales of Florida, USA, has had a learning disability. In seminary he read the assigned scriptures, and he managed to read the Book of Mormon before his mission.

When his mission president asked him to read 10

pages of scripture every day, he obeyed—but struggled.

“Despite my efforts to read, I never really enjoyed the scriptures,” he says. “A few months after I returned from the mission field, I married and started working and going to school. With my busy schedule, I stopped reading the scriptures regularly. I knew I should be reading them more, but I rationalized that I had read them already and had a good understanding of them.”

About 10 years later, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) encouraged Church members to read the scriptures daily.<sup>2</sup>

“I decided that I would read the scriptures every day from that day on,” Wayne says. “At least, I thought, it would be a good way to practice my reading.”

Wayne began by reading a chapter a day, and as he progressed, he would often read more. Within a few years, he had read the entire standard works of the Church. Later, when he heard the counsel of President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) to read the Book of Mormon regularly,<sup>3</sup> he redoubled his efforts.

## KEY POINTS

Scripture reading can give us power by helping us:

- Invite the Spirit into our personal lives and our homes.
- Find feelings of reassurance during hardship.
- Recognize the Lord’s hand in our lives.



# THE SCRIPTURES

and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which <sup>c</sup>witnesses of the <sup>d</sup>Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

19 And now my beloved brethren, after ye have entered into this strait and narrow way, ye should ask if all is <sup>b</sup>done. Nay; for ye have not yet received the Holy Spirit. Save it with understanding, and with unfeigned faith, in the heart, without hypocrisy, and without guile, ingenuously, and with sincerity, who is ready to obey the Father, who is ready to obey the Son, who is ready to obey the Father and the Son, who is ready to obey the Father and the Son, who is ready to obey the Father and the Son.

20 Wherefore, ye should press forward with the word of Christ, having faith, hope, and a charity, which is the greatest of all men. Wherefore, ye should press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and <sup>d</sup>endure to the end, ye shall have the Father: Ye shall have



## THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE

"I suggest that you memorize scriptures that touch your heart and fill your soul with understanding. When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased. Sometimes when there is a significant need in my life, I review mentally scriptures that have given me strength. There is great solace, direction, and power that flow from the scriptures, especially the words of the Lord."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "He Lives," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 87-88.



“I had come to love the ‘keystone of our religion,’”<sup>4</sup> he says, “and I had learned to appreciate the other books of scripture too, particularly the Old Testament. So I decided to read the Old Testament each day in addition to the Book of Mormon.”

Wayne says he was also inspired by the challenge given by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) in 2005 to read the entire Book of Mormon by the end of the year.<sup>5</sup>

“I was reading in Helaman at the time, but I started over, and I enjoyed being able to read along with my ward and my family,” he says. “As we did, we received the ‘added measure of the Spirit’<sup>6</sup> the prophet had promised us.”

Wayne says his commitment to scripture study has brought many blessings—including improved reading skills. “With every reading,” he says, “I get a little better.”

### Conquering Contention

Nancy del Plain of Washington, USA, was also inspired by prophetic counsel to read the Book of Mormon.

“Many years ago, my husband and I struggled to put an end to the bickering and complaining among our young children,” says Nancy. “All of our efforts to prevent contention were failing.”

Nancy says that when she listened to the words of President Benson in his memorable talk “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” she knew she had found her answer.

Quoting President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First

Counselor in the First Presidency, President Benson said: “I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. . . . Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness.”<sup>7</sup>

“I wanted—and our family needed—those promised blessings,” Nancy says. “I immediately began thinking of how we could begin reading scriptures as a family.” Nancy discussed her ideas with her husband, and they decided that dinnertime was their best option because it was the only time everyone was home regularly.

“The first time we tried, it was *not* a success,” Nancy says. “As soon as the prayer was over, the kids just wanted to eat. And for a while, things didn’t seem to improve—the children continued to be uncooperative.”

But the family persisted, and over time they began to have more meaningful experiences. Nancy says, “The most exciting part was that dinner conversations began to contain gospel-related questions and discussions. By the end of the year, the children not only were willing participants, but also were eager to bring friends home for dinner. Once, when a friend of one of the children was visiting, I heard a hurried whisper in the hall saying, ‘In our family, we kneel for family prayer before dinner, and then we read from the scriptures. You can kneel next to me.’”

“Certainly, all was not rosy and perfect from then on, but as the quality of our scripture reading improved, so did the quality of our relationships. There was a decrease in contention in our home. When the family faced a challenge, we were united in working out solutions. I also noticed that our children had more confidence. The promises of increased love, harmony, and respect were fulfilled.”

### Trusting in the Lord

For JoLyn Brown, of Utah, USA, a love of the scriptures began with a small, green piece of paper she received in



Primary. On it was written a simple scripture: Proverbs 3:5. JoLyn displayed the paper on a bulletin board in her bedroom. She enjoyed reading the scripture and the verse that followed: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

“I can still remember lying in bed at night and looking up at that scripture reference,” she says. “I eventually memorized the scripture, and over the years I have added others to my collection of quotes.”

JoLyn says memorizing scripture passages has been a powerful tool in working through a longtime battle with depression and anxiety. She says, “When I begin to feel overwhelmed, the Holy Ghost brings the sweet words of the scriptures to my mind. There have been many times when I have turned to Heavenly Father for reassurance. I am learning to trust His greater understanding, and I have been led along a path perfect for me.

“How grateful I am for my Primary teacher who gave me that small piece of paper that led me to what is now my favorite scripture. She opened the scriptures to me and planted a few poignant words in my heart. I am grateful for the simple, beautiful truths of the scriptures.”

### Seeing Tender Mercies

Stephanie Andersen, a mother of two in Utah, USA, was feeling discouraged. She longed to have more children but struggled with infertility and other health problems, and she felt stretched thin by her many responsibilities.

“I wanted life to go according to my own will and lacked the ability to see what the Lord had in store for me,” she explains. “I felt alone, angry, and frustrated. I had forgotten how to

see the tender mercies of the Lord in my life.”

She says she was inspired by the words of Nephi in the Book of Mormon: “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

“I knew that to move forward, I needed to find strength, courage, and faith in the Savior,” Stephanie says. She made a goal to diligently study the Book of Mormon throughout that year, hoping it would help her better recognize tender mercies in her life.

“As the months passed,” Stephanie says, “I often wrote in my journal, recording my thoughts and any inspiration I received while reading the scriptures. Soon I began to recognize the Lord’s hand in my life each day. I realized that although I still had trials, my life was *full* of blessings. Each day I found a scripture that uplifted and taught me, and the promptings of the Spirit helped me understand how I could apply the scriptures in my life.

“Studying the scriptures helped me change from feeling downtrodden and weary to feeling hopeful, joyful, and grateful. I have learned that to truly know and understand the Savior, we must read the Book of Mormon, for its pages are filled with messages of Him.” ■

#### NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Christlike Attributes—the Wind beneath Our Wings,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 101.
2. See Spencer W. Kimball, “How Rare a Possession—the Scriptures!” *Ensign*, Sept. 1976, 2–5.
3. See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 4–7.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon,” 4.
5. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Testimony,” 6.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon,” 7.



#### ADDED REVELATION

“Because they expound the doctrine of Christ, the scriptures are accompanied by the Holy Spirit, whose role it is to bear witness of the Father and the Son (see 3 Nephi 11:32). . . . Study the scriptures carefully, deliberately. Ponder and pray over them. Scriptures are revelation, and they will bring added revelation.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 35.



# Forgiveness

## AND MAKING UP FOR

# Losses

Name withheld

*I wanted to let go of the anger and hurt, but something always held me back.*

### KEY POINTS

- Our Savior wants us to let go of anger and hatred.
- To be fully healed from abuse, we need to forgive.
- We can find hope in Christ. He will restore all that we have lost.

I could not keep my mind on the Relief Society lesson about Jesus Christ's Atonement and the Resurrection. My mind kept returning to my need to forgive. I longed to feel the peace promised those who do. Instead, my emotions clamored whenever I thought of three individuals who had hurt my daughter Kaylee<sup>1</sup> and me. I wanted to let go of the angry and resentful feelings I still harbored, but something always held me back—my sense that we could never regain what we had lost as a result of their actions.

### Kaylee's Loss of Confidence

I stewed about Kaylee's second-grade teacher, whose insensitive behavior had caused long-term damage to her sense of self-worth and had torpedoed her desire to attend school. Throughout most of her elementary school years, Kaylee had an

undiagnosed learning disorder, so she struggled with reading and mathematics. When she made mistakes, this teacher made Kaylee an example of poor performance. When I sent notes from home asking for help in coordinating her studies or to express a concern, he'd scoff and read them aloud so that Kaylee's classmates could hear—a mortifying experience that brought teasing from her peers. In dismay, I watched my confident, happy child slowly crumble. Her love of learning evaporated. By the end of the school year, she resented school and believed she was too stupid to ever do well.

Once Kaylee was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and she began the right treatment, her ability to learn skyrocketed and she was eventually able to earn high grades. But she was still convinced that she was unintelligent and inferior. Every







## FULL HEALING COMES THROUGH THE SAVIOR

“There are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse.

“As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her. When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser. As a result, you will enjoy greater peace. While an important part of healing, if the thought of forgiveness causes you yet more pain, set that step aside until you have more experience with the Savior’s healing power in your own life. . . .

“I pray that you, as one abused or one who has caused it, will act now to avail yourself of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that your faith and obedience will assure that He will help you.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 42–43.

school day my husband and I had to persuade her to attend another day of classes. We mourned Kaylee’s loss of confidence, and we struggled for years to help her to see her true worth and to believe in herself.

### My Loss of Close Relationships

My resentment toward Kaylee’s former teacher was minuscule, however, compared to my feelings toward the man and woman who had sexually abused me decades earlier.

Through counseling with LDS Family Services, I had been able to work through much of my grieving and healing process. I had learned to dispel my skewed belief (common to many victims) that I could never be “good enough” to be loved by others. But to

be fully healed, I needed to forgive.

I longed to let go of my hatred for those two people because I knew it was what my Savior wanted. I craved the peace He promised. But how could I forgive those perpetrators who had created so much pain? Their abuse had caused decades of emotional instability and inner turmoil that had negatively impacted my relationship with my husband and children. The betrayal of my trust and innocence had created a fear of ever becoming emotionally close to another person, including members of my own family, so I had built invisible walls around my heart through which others could not enter. I grieved the lost decades of close relationships.

I had built  
invisible walls  
around my heart  
through which  
others could  
not enter.





## Christ's Redeeming Atonement

I wanted to follow the Savior's merciful example and genuinely forgive those who had hurt my daughter and me, but it was hard to set aside my anger at losing so much. For months I had prayed fervently for help and read many scriptures about forgiveness, trying to determine *how* to forgive.

As I sat in the Relief Society room that day, I prayed earnestly, silently, that Heavenly Father would help me.

Suddenly my attention was drawn to the instructor as she invited us to read a quotation from the Prophet Joseph Smith about the Resurrection. The quote began, "I am glad I have the privilege of communicating to you some things which, if grasped closely, will be a help to you when earthquakes bellow, the clouds gather, the lightnings flash, and the storms are ready to burst upon you like peals of thunder."<sup>2</sup>

As I pondered on this sentence, I looked for parallels between the Prophet's words and my own life (see 1 Nephi 19:23). "My emotions are stormy and broken," I thought. "Because of others, I feel like my and Kaylee's lives have been wrenched and divided by earthquakes."

As I read further, I found hope in the Prophet Joseph's exhortation to "lay hold of" hope in Christ and the joy that we anticipate in the

Resurrection, for as Joseph Smith said, "What can [these disasters] do? Nothing. *All your losses will be made up to you* in the resurrection, provided you continue faithful."<sup>3</sup> As I read that last sentence, understanding came: The Lord would make up *all* my losses, *all* of Kaylee's losses. I no longer needed to be angry. I no longer needed to mourn. Because of Him—because He would restore all that I'd lost—I could forgive! My heart surged with hope, and I smiled through tears of gratitude.

Kaylee's former teacher lived nearby, and I encountered him often. In these encounters, he seemed unaware of the pain he had caused, and I tried to hide my resentment. Not long after the Relief Society lesson that touched me so deeply, I ran into him again and caught his eye. The forgiveness I'd been longing for washed through me. I forgave him. My burden of animosity fled.

I am still working to completely forgive those who abused me. I continue to focus on the Lord's promise that all my losses will be made up to me, and forgiveness is growing in my heart. I am confident that as I try my best, the Lord will heal me of all resentment, and I will be free. ■

### NOTES

1. Name has been changed.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 51.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 51, emphasis added.

## THE SAVIOR CAME TO HEAL THE BROKENHEARTED

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised."

Luke 4:18

*For more on abuse, the Atonement, and forgiveness, see the entries for these topics in the Study by Topic section of LDS.org (lds.org/study/topics). Study by Topic provides articles, definitions, scriptures, and prophetic statements on a variety of subjects for personal study and learning. For more information about counseling through LDS Family Services, visit ldsfamilyservices.org.*





# That I May Heal You

*Repentance brings the healing power of  
the Atonement into our lives.*

**Dean M. Rueckert**

**D**uring the calamities experienced by the inhabitants of the American continent at the time of the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the people felt a “vapor of darkness” so profound that no light or fire could be kindled (3 Nephi 8:20–21). The voice of the Savior was then heard among all the inhabitants of the land, imploring, “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?” (3 Nephi 9:13).

These words may also be applied to those of us who have not properly repented of our sins and are experiencing feelings of guilt and darkness. Carrying the burden of past sins can darken the mind and create stumbling blocks to peace and joy and spiritual growth.

From the gospel of Matthew we read a similar plea:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

## **Step by Step**

When we are baptized and confirmed, we have entered into the gate, and there lies before us a “strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:18).

Baptism is the gate that opens the path leading back to the presence of God. Yet we are not saved at baptism as is sometimes taught and believed in the world. Repentance is not a one-time phenomenon that occurs only before baptism; it is something we do over and over again as we make progress along the strait and narrow path.

We progress along this path step by step. With each step we take, the Lord, by the power of His Spirit, sheds forth light upon



## The Atonement Brings Healing, Hope, and Peace

"I was only a young child, and we had lost all material belongings twice within only seven years. We were refugees with an uncertain future. However, during those same seven years, we gained more than any amount of money could ever buy. We found a supernal refuge, a place of defense from despair: the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church, led by a true and living prophet.

"The good news that Jesus Christ has made the perfect Atonement for mankind, redeeming all from the grave and rewarding each individual according to his or her works, was the healing power which brought hope and peace back into my life.

"Whatever our challenges in life may be, our burdens may become light if we not only believe in Christ but also in His ability and His power to cleanse and console our lives. Our lives are healed as we accept His peace."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Heeding the Voice of the Prophets," *Ensign*, July 2008, 5–6.

our lives, for "the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:46). However, if we do not continue to progress and take the next step as the Light of Christ illuminates our way, we may lose the light we once possessed (see D&C 1:33).

In Doctrine and Covenants 93:39, the Lord tells us, "That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers."

Then in the resultant darkness we stumble. We lose spiritual insight. Reality is distorted, and we lose the perspective of the truth we once understood.

When we hear the words "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," we sometimes judge ourselves as unworthy and fear that the Lord wouldn't want us to approach Him in our state of corruption.

### Come unto Christ

Some may feel that God is displeased with them or doesn't love them because they are still plagued with painful memories and bad feelings even though they are striving to serve Him. Following this line of thinking, they may feel rejected by God and then may reject Him. They may stop praying. They may continue to go through the motions of serving, but they stop believing.

Those negative thoughts and ideas about rejection by God do not come from Him. His plea to us states, "For I am meek and lowly in heart." *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines *meek* as "patient, mild, not inclined to anger or resentment." The Lord is not angry with us when we sincerely come unto Him.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, assures: "The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition . . . , there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. . . .

"Restoring what you cannot restore, healing the wound you cannot heal, fixing that which you broke and you cannot fix is the very purpose of the atonement of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

In the Book of Mormon we read: "[Christ] doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. *Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation.*

"Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: *Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price*" (2 Nephi 26:24–25; emphasis added).

### Trust in the Lord

May we have full trust and confidence in the Redeemer's power to heal us. The Savior implores us today, just as He implored the inhabitants of the American continent shortly after His Crucifixion, "Will ye . . . now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted that I may heal you?" (3 Nephi 9:13). Let us return to Him, for truly He lives and loves us. ■

#### NOTE

1. Boyd K. Packer, "The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19–20.







London, England



Bangalore, India

# Celebrating

By Kathryn H. Olson  
Welfare Services

Cleaning buildings, mopping floors, teaching students, collecting food, helping immigrants, visiting widows, weeding grounds, and painting schools. These are just a few of the many service projects carried out last year by Church members responding to the First Presidency's invitation to perform a day of service in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the welfare program. These projects have profoundly affected those who served and those who were served. Many communities around the world have been changed for the better.

## London, England

Church members in London celebrated the anniversary by helping clean up Tottenham, a city that experienced the August 2011 riots. In a regional park, volunteers weeded, built flower beds, and cleared litter.

Members also served at a children's hospice, where they cleaned garden pathways and made the hospice grounds more accommodating to the children and their families. Charlotte Illera helped coordinate the project. "It was really hard work, but it was really sort of joyful work as well," she said. "Even a little thing like sweeping up can be such a benefit. You don't need to have any great skills. Just little things can make a difference to other people."

Rudi Champagne shared his view on the inspiration behind the First Presidency's invitation to serve: "I think this revelation was to bring us closer together—to bring us out in the community, to meet new people." He continued, "To see the Church getting involved in the community is a wonderful thing. To be a part of it is even more special. It has strengthened my testimony, and it has given me the desire to do more."





Bujumbura, Burundi

# a Day of Service

## Hong Kong, China

Adult leaders of the youth in the Hong Kong China Stake asked the youth council to choose their own service project. After the youth looked into their community's needs, they decided to teach children from low-income families at a local school. Around 125 youth taught over 80 schoolchildren about developing talents, making healthy food, holding family gatherings, and creating true friendships.

"This was not just a one-time influence," said Anita Shum, stake Young Women president. "What the youth have done with the kids could have a lasting effect." She added that the youth now have good memories and experiences that will bless them forever.

## Accra, Ghana

Members in Accra, Ghana, participated in a day of service by painting schools, sweeping

streets and gutters, and cleaning the grounds around hospitals and clinics.

Emma Owusu Ansah of the Accra Ghana Christiansborg Stake was involved in planning their day of service. "Coming together as members of the Church unifies us and makes a principle like service easier to obey," she said. At the end of the project, members gathered to share their testimonies. Sister Ansah remarked, "After listening to the individual testimonies, I realized how much we are missing when not serving others."

When President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, issued the invitation to participate in a day of service, he spoke of the unifying effect the projects would have: "A . . . gospel principle that has been a guide to me in welfare work is the power and blessing of unity. When we join hands to serve people in need, the Lord unites our hearts."<sup>1</sup>



*Falls Church, Virginia, USA*



**FEELINGS OF CHARITY**

“The Lord is keeping His promise to you as you keep yours. As you serve others for Him, He lets you feel His love. And in time, feelings of charity become part of your very nature. And you will receive the assurance of Mormon in your heart as you persist in serving others in life that all will be well with you.”

**President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Witness,” Ensign, Nov. 2011, 68.**

**Córdoba, Argentina**

Despite the rain on an October day, 1,601 Latter-day Saints from five stakes in Córdoba, Argentina, donated a combined 10,234 hours of service at a nursing home. Members delivered previously collected clothing, food, and hygiene kits. They also gardened, painted walls and benches, and performed talent shows. A number of sisters also volunteered hair, foot, and hand care services.

“I know that project was a help not only for them but for me too,” said 14-year-old Rocío B. after the project. “I knew I was doing the right thing and that Heavenly Father was pleased with me.”

**São Paulo, Brazil**

Members of the São Paulo Brazil Stake felt inspired to collect sugar, oil, rice, and beans and donate the food to two charities. Then they trained representatives from the charities in the basics of food storage. Members also volunteered to present education, finance, and employment training to stake and community members to help them develop the skills necessary to compete for available jobs.

“The community we invited was delighted

with the work of the Church. Many did not know us, but they went away with good feelings,” said stake member Kátia Ribeiro. “Among the members, there was a spirit of unity and service, and among those who were served, there was a spirit of deep gratitude.”

**Falls Church, Virginia, USA**

Members in Falls Church, Virginia, USA, felt the joy of serving together at two homeless shelters. Scrubbing a wall, Adeana Alvarez told a fellow ward member, “I’ve had a frustrating

week, and it feels good to just take out the frustration on this wall! We all need service at some time in our lives, and it’s good to do it for other people.”

Another ward member, Anne Sorensen, remarked, “It’s a great way to be connected with your community. I now feel more invested in what is going on with that organization. Every time I drive by here, I’ll think about the people who attend classes here and hope that the work we did gives them a tangible way to feel like they aren’t alone in what they are doing to improve their lives.”

**Tokorozawa, Japan**

At an elementary school in Tokorozawa, Church members presented a seminar on food storage to 50 parents and educators. Because of the March 2011 earthquake, community members were eager to learn how to prepare for natural disasters, especially how to put together a long-term food supply.

“Even though the great east Japan earthquake occurred, I hadn’t done anything to prepare,” said one participant. “I was glad I was able to learn this. I want to find a place to store food, and I want to do this to protect my dear family.”

TOP: PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD SCHWANEVELDT



Musashino Japan Stake member Akihito Suda observed that the Light of Christ touched the community as members showed the preparations they had made in case of a crisis. “Christ is the Light of the World,” he said. “His teachings illuminate the community.”

### Tallinn, Estonia

Church members in Tallinn spent a day helping needy community members perform maintenance on their homes. Some participants chopped wood and shoveled coal, while others cleaned carpets, changed curtains, and washed windows and walls.

Maila Chan went with her family to visit an older woman and chop wood for her. “As a mother I am so happy that our family had such a wonderful experience,” she said. “How great it is that while serving others, you forget your own problems completely. I know that while serving others, we only serve our God.”

Margit Timakov also observed, “Putting aside my own duties and committing myself wholly

to helping somebody, I understood what power sacrifice really has. We do not need to ask why or whether we could have done something else. We just reach out and help. We help because we care. We help because we want to follow Christ’s example.”

### The Fruit of Your Labors

The testimonies of those who served their communities around the world teach us that by serving, we feel better about ourselves and our testimonies grow. President Eyring affirmed that we are blessed for our service: “For the Master I extend thanks for your work to serve the children of our Heavenly Father. He knows you, and He sees your effort, diligence, and sacrifice. I pray that He will grant you the blessing of seeing the fruit of your labors in the happiness of those you have helped and with whom you have helped for the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 25.
2. Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, May 2011, 26.

### ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Seeing Mormon Helping Hands in the community, some may wonder if Church members are helping fellow Latter-day Saints only or those of other faiths as well. We are, of course, helping both. We strive to follow the Savior’s example in serving, whether that’s raking leaves in a neighbor’s yard or sending and distributing tons of supplies to respond to a natural disaster. We seek to help others, regardless of their faith or culture.

### RECOGNITION IN COMMUNITIES

One of the common attributes of the worldwide day of service projects was the effect they had on local communities. Many passersby stopped to ask project participants questions about the Church, and members shared their testimonies.

In several parts of the world, government officials recognized the efforts of Church members. For instance, in a radio interview about the day of service, the chief from the Kisanga quarter of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, called on people of other religions to follow the example of “the Mormons” in serving the community.

Of the service given by 300 members of the Church in the greater London area, the mayor, Boris Johnson, remarked, “Now, more than ever, it is great to see community-minded Londoners—volunteers—who turned out in droves.”

Governor Dannel Malloy of Connecticut, USA, and Governor Robert McConnell of Virginia, USA, issued proclamations to honor the days of service in their states. Governor Malloy said in his proclamation, “We are thankful to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for their service to others and [for their] invitation to all of the residents of all faiths and backgrounds to join with them as they celebrate their anniversary year of service.”



## LOOK AT THE LAST PAGE

**W**hen I joined the Church, I was eager to get involved in family history work. I began visiting local archives to search for my ancestors' information in public records.

I found the work fulfilling, but it was not always easy. The old handwriting was often difficult to read, and some of the books were moldy, which agitated my asthma. Still, I continued researching as best I could.

One day I was researching about my grandfather, looking for his date of birth. I found a 1,500-page book that might be helpful. But what if it didn't have the answer I needed? I dreaded having to look through more big, dusty books.

I began skimming the book's contents, hoping a familiar name would catch my eye. Suddenly, I thought I heard someone say, "The last page." I looked around, but it did not appear that anyone had spoken to me. I continued and read several more pages. Then I heard the same words again: "The last page." Somewhat hesitantly, I decided to check the last page. I found the text that is usually written there: a summary of children born and the total number of pages. Just in case, I checked the page that preceded the last one but found nothing helpful there, so I turned back to the page I had been reading before.

My thoughts were soon interrupted once more by the soft but persistent

voice: "The last page!" I decided to try the last page again and read the now-familiar text several times.

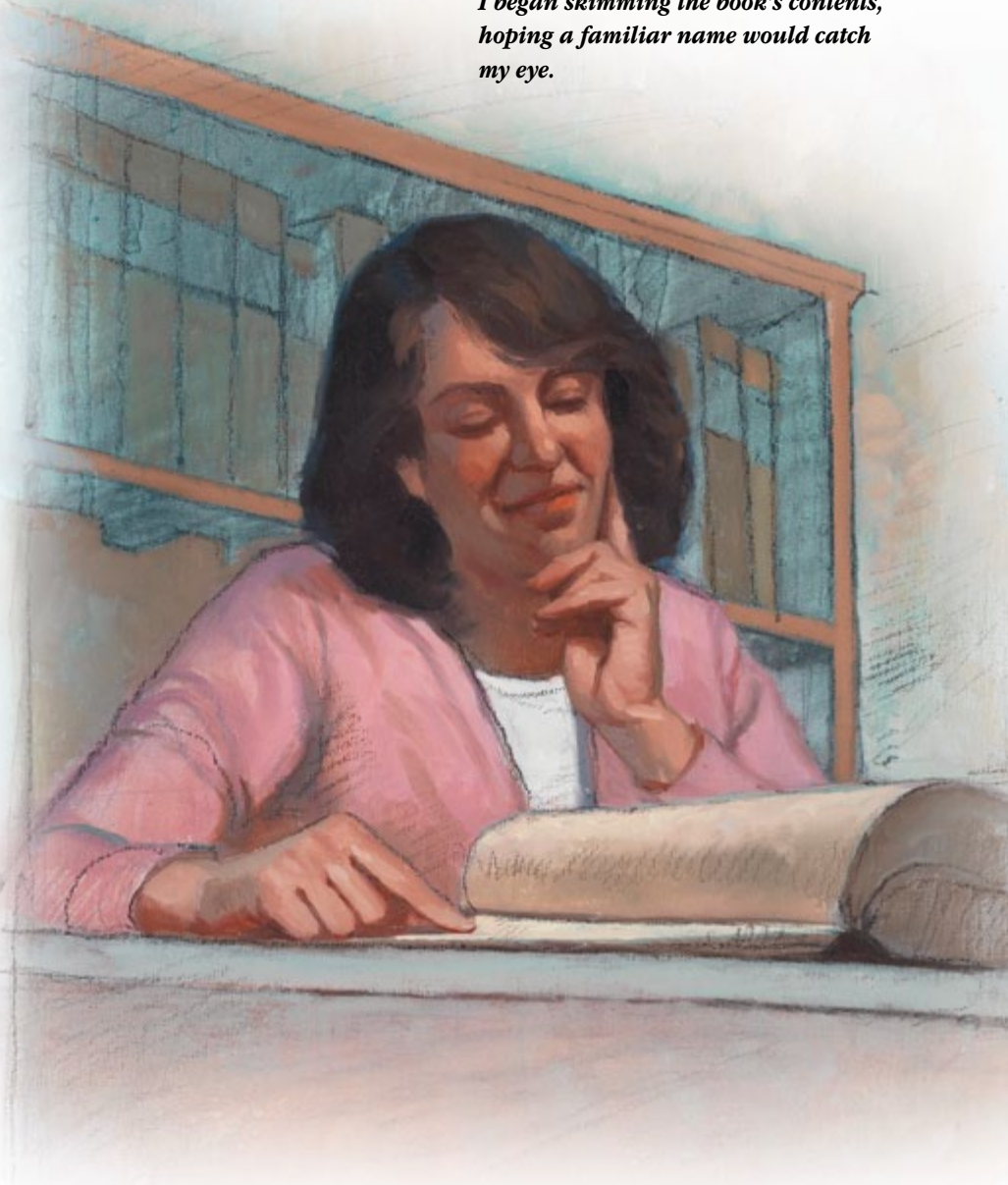
Then I noticed something I had missed before: an extra page pasted inside the back cover. As I read the handwriting scribbled across the page, I saw the names of children born near the end of December. There I recognized my grandfather's

name and saw that it stated where and when he was born and baptized. I was astonished but filled with gratitude that I had been led to the information I needed.

Family history can be challenging at times, but I know that God guides and assists us in our efforts. ■

Natalia Shcherbakova, Ukraine, as told to Pavlyna Ubyiko

*I began skimming the book's contents, hoping a familiar name would catch my eye.*





## I CHOSE THE GOOD PART

As I prepared for my daughter's wedding, my mind was so occupied with wedding plans that I rarely thought of anything besides my checklist. One morning I looked at my long list of tasks. I was making progress, but I still needed to do some deep cleaning. I had been putting off cleaning the kitchen blinds, so I decided to tackle that chore.

As I climbed on the counter with my rags, brushes, and cleaner, I could see that it was going to be a dirty job. While I worked, my mind wandered to the story of Martha and Mary, the sisters who had welcomed the Savior into their home. While Martha "was cumbered about much serving," Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." Martha asked Jesus to tell her sister to help with the chores, but the Savior told her that "Mary hath chosen that good part" (see Luke 10:38–42).

"Today I will just have to be Martha," I thought. The truth was that I had been Martha for several weeks, "cumbered about" with mundane chores and wedding preparations.

My mind wandered again, and I tried to remember when my blinds had last been cleaned so thoroughly. I thought of the two girls who had come to help me get ready for a gathering at my house two years earlier. Together they had scrubbed my kitchen from floor to ceiling, including the blinds. That memory



*I picked up the phone and dialed the number of an old friend I hadn't talked to in years, planning to tell her about my daughter's wedding.*

reminded me of their mother, an old friend I hadn't talked to in years.

At that moment I picked up the phone and dialed her number to tell her about my daughter's wedding. I didn't expect her to answer because she taught school, but I happened to call during her planning hour. We spent the next hour laughing, crying, and sharing. She had recently been through a difficult divorce and had been feeling alone and abandoned. As we talked, our spirits were lifted and our hearts were comforted.

I marveled at the way the Lord was able to work through me even while I

was doing something as mundane as cleaning blinds. I marveled even more at the truth that He knows and loves each of us enough to send help at the very hour and moment we need it.

That night I smiled as I put a check mark on my list next to "clean the kitchen blinds." Though I felt a sense of satisfaction from completing the chore, I felt a greater sense of gratitude knowing I had been an instrument in the Lord's hands. He had shown me how I could be a Mary who chose the "good part" even as I was a Martha "cumbered about" my chores. ■  
Jeanette Mahaffey, Missouri, USA

## THE RIGHT SCRIPTURE AT THE RIGHT TIME

**W**hile serving as an assistant chaplain in the Maricopa County Jail system in Arizona, USA, I would visit and share a scripture and prayer with detainees who requested a Latter-day Saint chaplain. On one occasion a young woman made such a request.

I went to her area of the jail, which was behind several locked doors. The reception area had two cafeteria-style tables with a bench on each side and one desk with a guard. I gave the guard the request slip, slid onto one of the benches, and waited for the young woman.

I arose as she entered the reception area, greeted her, and suggested we sit at the table. She looked sad and unkempt and was on the verge of tears. As she discussed her situation, I considered what scripture I would share. I listened carefully to her concerns, and as she disclosed the difficulties she had had with various compulsive behaviors and poor choices, I thought of the perfect scripture to help her: Mosiah 3:19.

I opened the Book of Mormon to Mosiah 3:19, pushed it toward her, and asked her to read. She seemed a little disgruntled at first and began reading in a fast, singsong voice that seemed to express annoyance at being asked to read a scripture. As she finished the first phrase, “For the natural man is an enemy to God,” I interrupted to explain the meaning of

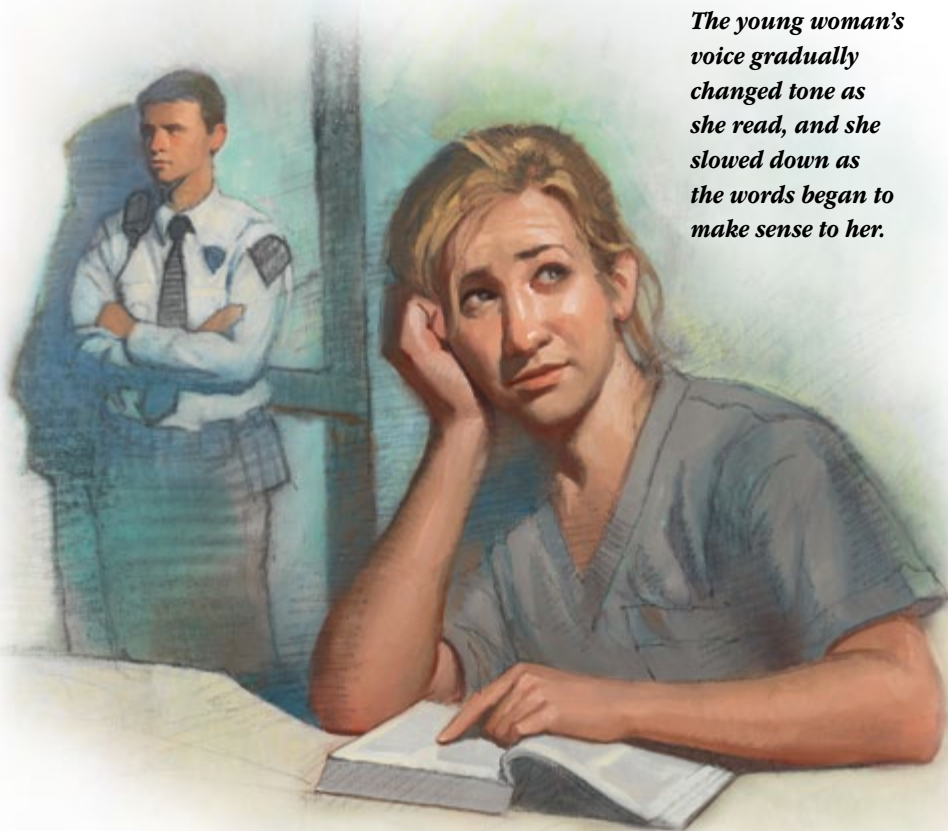
“natural man.” When she understood the reference, she continued to read. Her voice gradually changed tone, and she slowed down as the words began to make sense to her.

When she started to read the list of childlike attributes of “a saint,” she slowed down even more. I could tell she was absorbing the meaning of each attribute listed in the verse. When she read “submissive, meek, humble, patient,” I began to feel the Spirit all around us. As she read the words “full of love, willing to submit,” I witnessed a change in her. Her face brightened and her attitude, tone of voice, and general

manner seemed affected by the Spirit. I could see hope as she was taught by the Spirit what these words meant to her and how she should make the changes described in the scripture.

I said a prayer and then shook the young woman’s hand warmly. I left the jail on a spiritual high. I had never before seen such an immediate, powerful, magnificent effect from the scriptures. I knew Mosiah 3:19 because I have frequently encountered it while reading the scriptures, but never before had I understood the depth of the impact it could have on someone. ■  
Allen Hunsaker, Arizona, USA

*The young woman’s voice gradually changed tone as she read, and she slowed down as the words began to make sense to her.*





## YOU HAVE NOT FASTED

In 1998 I was enjoying being a young mother. But I panicked one day when I realized that my six-month-old son made whistling sounds when he breathed and couldn't swallow anything. The doctor immediately diagnosed bronchiolitis, a swelling of the smallest air passages in the lungs usually caused by a viral infection. He prescribed both medication and physical therapy.

The visits to the physical therapist were a trial for my son and me. My son was uncomfortable being moved in every direction, and I worried that the therapy caused him pain. I took courage, however, when the therapist explained the benefits of therapy.

Despite the medical treatment and the therapy, my son's condition didn't improve. He ate little, and the whistling continued. The doctor prescribed 5 more sessions with the physical therapist in addition to the 10 we had already attended.

While I waited during the 13th session, I read an article posted in the doctor's office titled "Bronchiolitis Kills." As I read, I realized that my son could die. I felt as though my heart was in a vise. At the end of the session, the therapist told me that my son's condition wasn't improving. I'm not sure how I got home safely because tears blurred my vision.

I called my husband and then began to pray. I told my Heavenly

Father that if His will was to take my son, He would need to give me the strength to bear it.

After my prayer I asked myself what we could do in addition to the prayers we had uttered and the priesthood blessings our son had received. I glanced at the bookshelf and saw a copy of the *Liahona* (*L'Étoile* at the time). I opened it at random, searching for help, and found an article titled "I Fasted for My Baby." Then I clearly heard a voice say, "You have not fasted for your child."

I had not, so I immediately began to fast for him. At the therapy session the next day, I was still fasting. After examining my son,

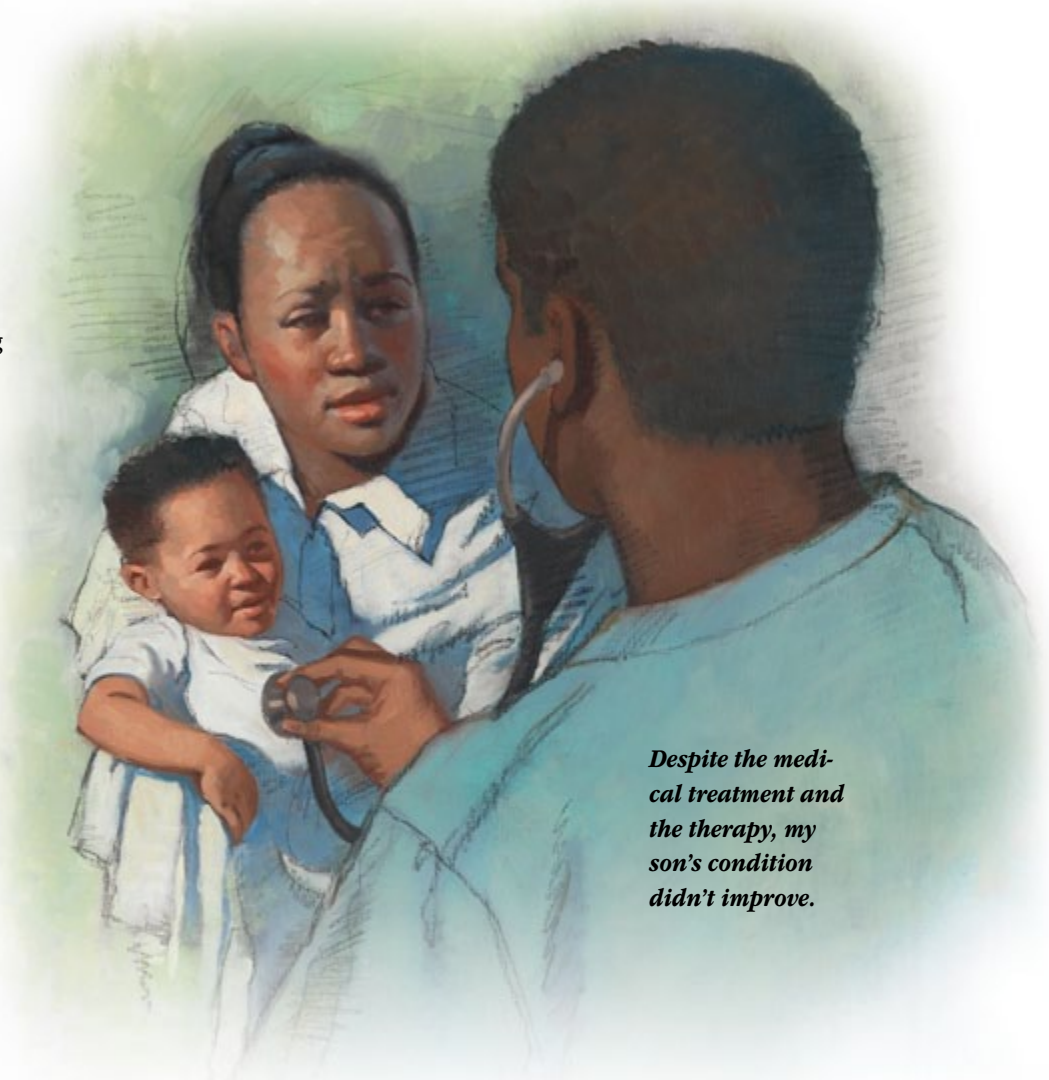
the therapist looked surprised.

"Madame," he told me, "your son is fine. I don't understand, but he doesn't need any more sessions."

I couldn't hold back the tears of joy. Returning home, I knelt to thank God for His mercy and love. I called my husband to tell him the good news. Then I ended my fast in peace, not doubting the intervention of the Lord.

My son was healed thanks to faith, prayer, priesthood blessings, *and* fasting. I have no doubt that my Heavenly Father loves me and that He also loves my son. I am confident that He will continue to help us overcome our difficulties. ■

Ketty Constant, Guadeloupe



*Despite the medical treatment and the therapy, my son's condition didn't improve.*

# News of the Church

Visit [news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org) for more Church news and events.

## Church Magazines' New Series to Highlight For the Strength of Youth Standards

By Lok Yi Chan

Church News and Events

Starting this month, the Church magazines will launch a series of articles that highlight the standards outlined in the newly updated version of *For the Strength of Youth*.

### Content for Youth

The Young Men and Young Women general presidents are introducing the series in this month's issue of the *Liahona* and *New Era*, and the series will appear in both magazines each month thereafter, excluding the May and November issues.

Each of the other 10 months, a different standard in the booklet will be featured in an article authored by a member of the Young Men or Young Women general presidencies or a member of the Seventy.

Each article will also be accompanied by specific experiences of youth around the world pertaining to *For the Strength of Youth*. For this reason, the Church magazines are soliciting content from youth.

Young women and young men around the world are encouraged to submit their stories or experiences in living the standards from *For the Strength of Youth* to the *Liahona* or the *New Era* through their websites or by e-mail at [NewEra@ldschurch.org](mailto:NewEra@ldschurch.org). Youth can also share brief experiences by leaving comments at [youth.lds.org](http://youth.lds.org) by clicking on **For the Strength of Youth** under **Youth**

**Menu**, clicking on one of the 19 standards, and clicking on **Share Your Experiences**. Church members ages 12 to 18 can log in with their LDS Account username and password and share their experiences.

### Content for Adults and Children

Although the new series will mainly target youth, the standards apply to members of all age groups in the Church, as Ann M. Dibb, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, recently taught.

"One of the greatest ways we can arise and shine forth is to confidently obey the commandments of God. We learn of these commandments in the scriptures, from modern-day prophets, and within the pages of the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*," she said during the 2012 general Young Women meeting. "Each of you should have your own copy. On my personal copy, I have circled the words *for* and *you* [the first three letters of *youth*], as taught to me by a respected friend. This simple act reminds me that these standards are not just general guidelines—they are specifically *for me*. I hope you will take the time to ... read it cover to cover and feel the Spirit testify that the standards are *for you* as well" ("Arise and Shine Forth," *Ensign*, May 2012, 117).

A one-page article for adults about how parents can teach that month's standard to

*This month, the Church magazines are launching a series of articles that highlight the standards outlined in the newly updated version of For the Strength of Youth.*





## For the Strength of Youth AN ANCHOR FOR TODAY



**David L. Beck**  
Young Men General  
President



**Elaine S. Dalton**  
Young Women  
General President

The First Presidency wrote that the standards in *For the Strength of Youth* “will help you with the important choices you are making now and will yet make in the future.” With the release of a new edition of the pamphlet, Church magazines were able to spend a few moments with Young Women general president Elaine S. Dalton and Young Men general president David L. Beck talking about the revised pamphlet.

### Why a new edition of *For the Strength of Youth* now?

**Brother Beck:** The Lord’s standards have not changed, but the adversary’s

attacks against those standards have increased in frequency and intensity. *For the Strength of Youth* has been updated to help youth withstand these attacks.

**Sister Dalton:** Prophets continue to speak in very clear terms to youth, and we want to keep their current words available. Youth need to be anchored in following the prophet, so recent teachings have been integrated into this pamphlet.

**Brother Beck:** As President Thomas S. Monson has reminded us, today’s youth are growing up in a time when the gap between the Lord’s standards and the world’s

standards is widening.<sup>1</sup> Temptations are becoming stronger, and sinful behavior is becoming more socially acceptable. The inspired counsel in this new pamphlet is an indication of Heavenly Father’s love for the youth. He wants each young person to enjoy the blessings of living the gospel and has given them standards to help them. He has an important work for them to do now. The standards in *For the Strength of Youth* help qualify them to perform His work.

This goes along well with another new section: “Physical and Emotional Health.” You need to be physically healthy and take care of your body, but you also need to be mindful of your emotional health.

**Brother Beck:** Additional emphasis has also been placed on following the Spirit and living worthy to attend the temple.

### How can youth make *For the Strength of Youth* a part of their lives?

**Sister Dalton:** I’d like for them to look for the blessings mentioned in the pamphlet and think about how these blessings will lead them to their goals. I really believe this generation is preparing the earth for the Savior’s Second Coming. I would urge youth to remember that they want to stand with confidence in His presence when He comes again.



**Brother Beck:** The *Fulfilling My Duty to God* and *Young Women Personal Progress* booklets also offer several good ideas. For example, in the “Live Worthy” sections of *Duty to God*, young men are invited to study the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, make a plan to live by them, and then share their experiences with others. By doing so, they strengthen not only their own testimonies, but they also strengthen others.

**Sister Dalton:** Another interesting exercise would be for the youth to go through *For the Strength of Youth* and circle all mentions of the Spirit. Living these standards will enable



### What has been updated with this edition?

**Sister Dalton:** “Work and Self-Reliance” has been added. A lot of youth are spending so much time with new technologies—social networking, Internet browsing, video gaming—that they never really learn how to work. That’s a concern because when a young person goes on a mission, sometimes he or she isn’t prepared for the rigors of that hard physical and spiritual labor.



their children will be included in the *Ensign* each month. And, when the topics in *For the Strength of Youth* correspond with topics in My Gospel Standards for Primary children, there will also be an article for children in the *Liahona* and the *Friend*.

David L. Beck, Young Men general president, emphasized the significance of *For the Strength of Youth* for youth, parents, and leaders.

“It is our hope that these standards will be thoroughly studied in our homes and in

Church classes, and that the principles taught in them will go down into the hearts of the youth of the Church,” he said.

To help the youth better understand and apply the standards in their lives, additional resources are provided online at youth.lds.org. Here, teens, their parents, and their leaders can find statements and articles by General Authorities on each standard, as well as videos, posters, questions and answers, experiences from youth, and other resources. ■

# New Area Leaders Assigned

The First Presidency has announced the following changes in area leadership assignments effective on August 1, 2012. All members of Area Presidencies are members of the First or Second Quorums of the Seventy. ■

## Presidency of the Seventy



Ronald A. Rasband  
Assists in All Areas



Walter F. González  
1. North America Southeast



L. Whitney Clayton  
2. Utah North  
3. Utah Salt Lake City  
4. Utah South



Donald L. Hallstrom  
5. North America Northeast



Tad R. Callister  
6. North America Southwest



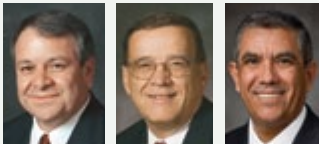
Richard J. Maynes  
7. North America Northwest  
8. North America West



Craig C. Christensen  
9. Idaho  
10. North America Central



### 11. Mexico



Benjamin De Hoyos  
First Counselor

Daniel L. Johnson  
President

José L. Alonso  
Second Counselor

### 12. Central America

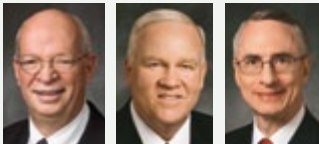


Carlos H. Amado  
First Counselor

James B. Martino  
President

Robert C. Gay  
Second Counselor

### 13. Caribbean

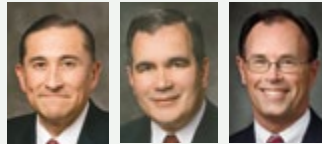


J. Devn Cornish  
First Counselor

Wilford W. Andersen  
President

Claudio D. Zivic  
Second Counselor

### 14. South America Northwest

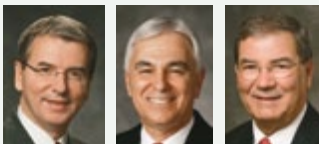


Juan A. Uceda  
First Counselor

Rafael E. Pino  
President

W. Christopher Waddell  
Second Counselor

### 15. Brazil

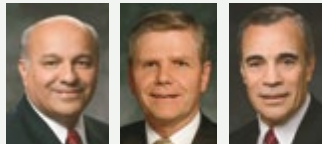


Carlos A. Godoy  
First Counselor

Claudio R. M. Costa  
President

Jairo Mazzagardi  
Second Counselor

### 16. South America South



Jorge F. Zeballos  
First Counselor

Mervyn B. Arnold  
President

Francisco J. Viñas  
Second Counselor

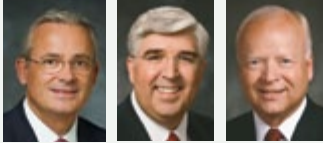
### 17. Middle East/Africa North



Bruce D. Porter  
Bruce A. Carlson  
Administered from Church Headquarters



### 18. Europe



Patrick Kearon  
**First Counselor**

José A. Teixeira  
**President**

Kent F. Richards  
**Second Counselor**

### 19. Europe East



Randall K. Bennett  
**First Counselor**

Larry R. Lawrence  
**President**

Per G. Malm  
**Second Counselor**

### 20. Asia



Gerrit W. Gong  
**First Counselor**

Kent D. Watson  
**President**

Larry Y. Wilson  
**Second Counselor**

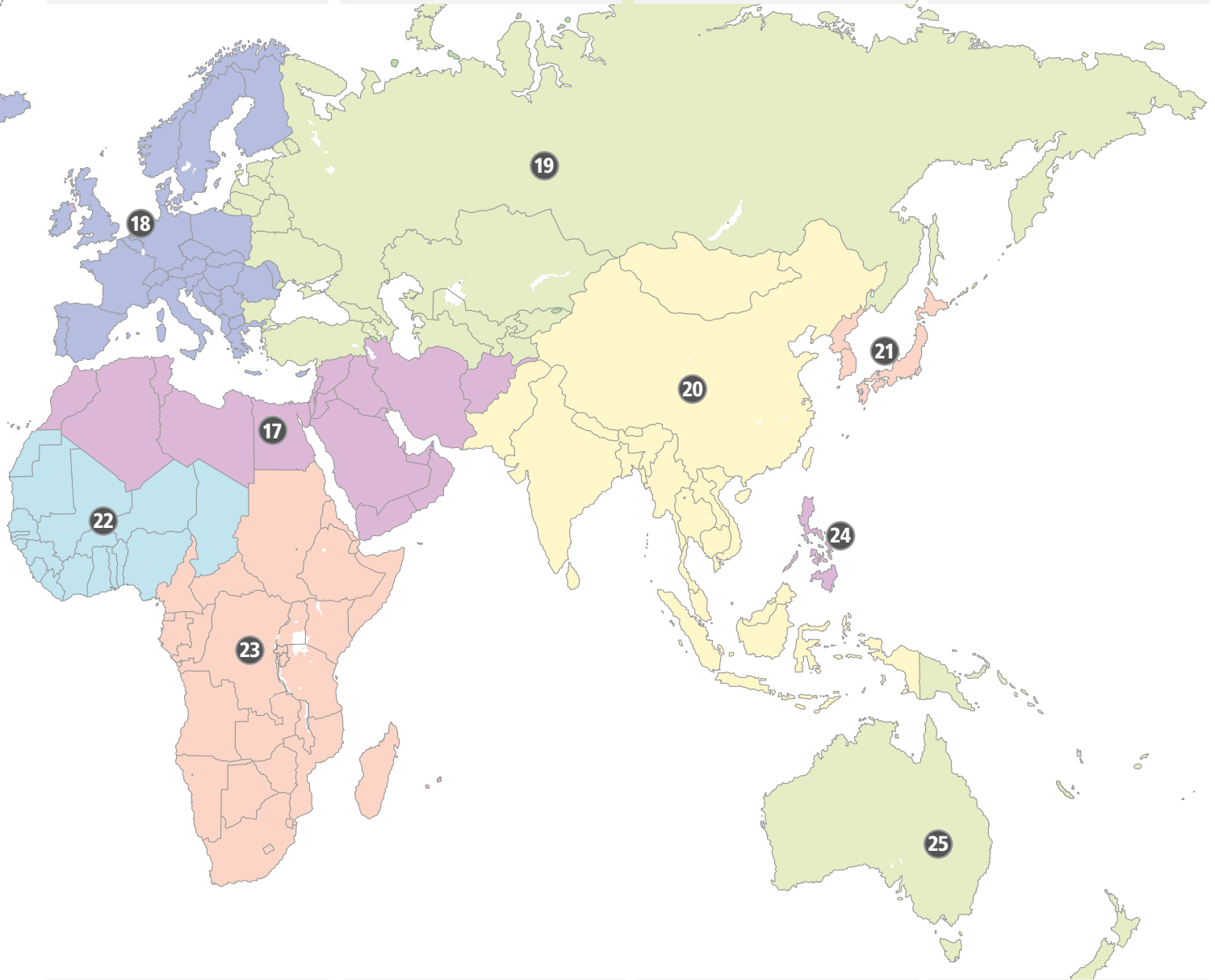
### 21. Asia North



Kazuhiko Yamashita  
**First Counselor**

Michael T. Ringwood  
**President**

Koichi Aoyagi  
**Second Counselor**



### 22. Africa West



Joseph W. Sitati  
**First Counselor**

John B. Dickson  
**President**

LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.  
**Second Counselor**

### 23. Africa Southeast



Ulisses Soares  
**First Counselor**

Dale G. Renlund  
**President**

Carl B. Cook  
**Second Counselor**

### 24. Philippines

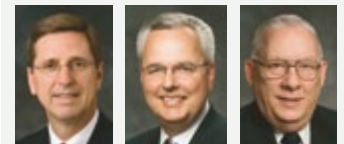


Brent H. Nielson  
**First Counselor**

Michael John U. Teh  
**President**

Ian S. Ardem  
**Second Counselor**

### 25. Pacific



Kevin W. Pearson  
**First Counselor**

James J. Hamula  
**President**

F. Michael Watson  
**Second Counselor**

# ANSWERING QUESTIONS

## ABOUT OUR FAITH

By Michael Otterson

Managing Director, Church Public Affairs Department

I had been a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints just a few days when a casual conversation among a group of friends turned to my recent conversion.

Some were intrigued, even fascinated. A few were indifferent. One young woman my age simply and uncompromisingly refused to believe I was Christian.

It was my first taste of trying to explain my beliefs to those who did not share them. I remember feeling utterly frustrated as I tried to penetrate a mind so tightly shuttered that no amount of reasoning could pry it open.

As the Church grows it will face increasing scrutiny, like any major faith, and that will lead to many more face-to-face or online conversations between our members and their families, friends, and associates who don't share our faith.

Paying attention to some basic principles can help members respond to questions or comments with more confidence.

### Live Your Religion

One of the great advantages that faithful Church members have is that

our faith encourages us to “live our religion.” There is a sense of authenticity that comes as friends and associates see the connection between what one says and what one does.

If a Latter-day Saint's life is his or her best sermon, then our conversations ought also to be open, genuine, and engaged in with a spirit of kindness, even if people ask inappropriate questions or adopt a cynical tone. Our claims to be followers of Jesus Christ are most convincing when our actions are in harmony with our beliefs. When we are answering questions or even criticisms, there will be times when we need a thick skin. We may also need a sense of humor.

In 2007 at a commencement ceremony for BYU–Hawaii graduates, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “If you live the principles of the gospel [rather than] just study them, that special combination of knowledge will allow you to feel comfortable and prepared to teach what you know to be true—in any setting.”

### Set the Context

When we are addressing questions or comments about our faith, it is

important to establish some context from the outset.

Rather than simply responding to a series of random questions, it might be helpful to first take 30 seconds to establish a foundation. That can be as simple as explaining that we embrace Jesus Christ as our Savior and accept the Bible's teachings about His birth, life, ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. We also believe that the Christian world departed from the truths Jesus taught in the Bible and that the Church He established needed to be restored.

Laying out the foundational beliefs of the Church in this way supplies a reference point as the discussion turns to other tenets of the gospel.

### Connect the Dots

As members listen to questions, they can discern the gospel principle at the heart of the question and connect the answer back to the Savior.

For example, why do we send missionaries to Christian countries? Because in His day Jesus sent His messengers two by two “into all the world.” And we do the same today. Why do we frown on cohabitation before marriage? Because Jesus and





*Sharing personal experiences can be a more effective way to answer questions than reciting memorized answers.*

His Apostles taught the sanctity of marriage and all that goes with it.

We do not need complicated, sophisticated secular arguments when the principles we try to live by come from the Son of God.

### **Share Personal Experiences**

Answering our friends' questions is not about reciting memorized answers. Sharing genuine, personal experiences can invite the Spirit to bear witness and carry the

message into the listener's heart.

One of the greatest hindrances to sharing our faith is being afraid we don't have the answers. Few people in other churches are experts in their own history or doctrine, and studies show that Latter-day Saints are incredibly well educated in their own faith by comparison.

When someone asks a question about the Church's doctrine or history that we don't know, it's okay to say, "I don't know." But we can all share

### **ONLINE RESOURCES**

The Church has created online resources that can be helpful for members to share with those who have questions.

[Mormon.org](http://Mormon.org)

[Mormon.org/Jesus Christ](http://Mormon.org/Jesus Christ)

[Mormonnewsroom.lds.org](http://Mormonnewsroom.lds.org)

[LDS.org](http://LDS.org)

[Liahona.LDS.org](http://Liahona.LDS.org)



***When answering friends' questions, be yourself. Who you are is often the reason they asked you the question.***

personal experiences to explain how we feel about our faith.

If we relate our own experiences about prayer or fasting or communicating effectively with our families, those experiences can't be challenged. They are ours, and no one understands them better than we do.

### **Be Aware of Your Audience**

Some people won't approach a member with questions because they fear being roped into a half-hour lecture. If they ask a casual question, be sensitive to their interest, comfort, and level of understanding. Signaling our sensitivity at the outset can put those who are curious at ease.

Understand that the same conversation isn't going to work for

everyone due to differing backgrounds—religious, secular, and otherwise.

### **Sharing What We Believe**

Members of the Church have an unprecedented opportunity to be a force for good in helping clear up misconceptions about what we are not and to increase others' understanding of who we are and what we believe.

As people learn more about Latter-day Saint beliefs, they may see some distinct differences and yet find some unexpected common ground on which to build better relationships.

*For more on this topic, listen to a Mormon Channel interview with Brother Otterson at [mormonchannel.org](http://mormonchannel.org). ■*

## Helpful Hints

### **Assume the Best**

It can be intimidating when someone asks probing questions about our faith. However, for the most part, people are just curious. Don't be defensive.

### **Listen Carefully**

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that the gift of discernment operates best when we are listening. To really understand the question and the intent, ask clarifying questions and be prepared to do as much listening as you do talking.

### **Honor Agency**

All people have God-given moral agency. So we may invite or even persuade—but we should not pressure or coerce.

### **Avoid Church Jargon**

Avoid Latter-day Saint terminology or jargon that can sound foreign, like "ward," "family home evening," or "Word of Wisdom." If you use these terms, explain them without waiting to be asked.

### **Use the Church's Full Name**

Whenever possible, use the full name of the Church at least once, and early in the conversation. There is a power in the name of the Church, so explain it. It says a great deal about who we are.





### Oliver Cowdery Ordains Joseph Smith, by Walter Rane

*On April 6, 1830, in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, USA, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized. As presiding officers of the Church, Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery ordained each other to the office of elder in the Church—first Joseph laid his hands on the head of Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an elder of the Church, and Oliver similarly ordained Joseph (see D&C 21, section introduction).*

*They were following the pattern given to them by John the Baptist when he conferred the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph and Oliver on May 15, 1829 (see D&C 13:1). Joseph wrote of the event, saying that John the Baptist “commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me. Accordingly we went and were baptized . . . after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded” (Joseph Smith—History 1:70–71).*



*“As we go about our daily lives,”  
teaches President Thomas S. Monson,  
“we discover countless opportunities to  
follow the example of the Savior.  
When our hearts are in tune with  
His teachings, we discover the  
unmistakable nearness of His divine  
help. It is almost as though we are on  
the Lord’s errand.” President Monson  
is himself an example of one who  
seeks divine help in his daily life and  
answers the call to serve.  
See “Thomas S. Monson: Answering  
the Call of Duty,” page 10.*